THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY
JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

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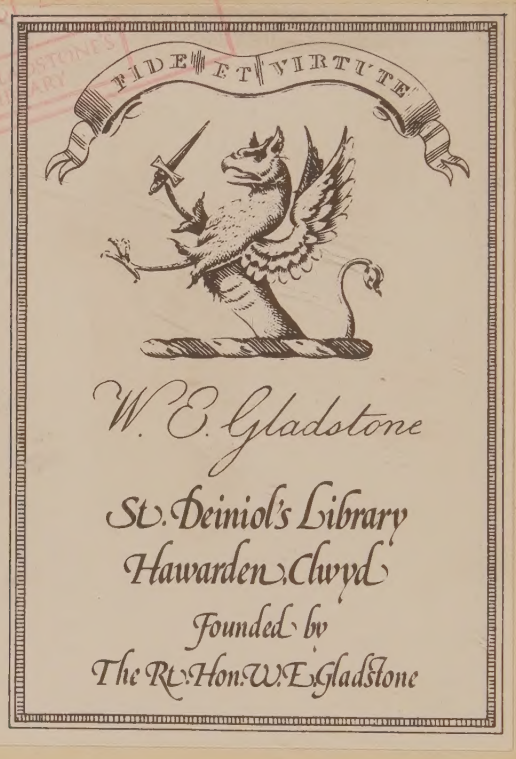

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'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES,' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
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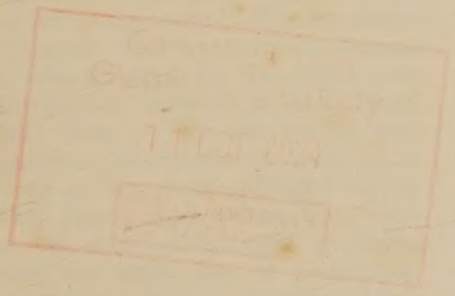
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK

VOLUME II



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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK

Christ and Marriage

Mark x. 2.—'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?'

THIS is one of the questions which the enemies of Jesus, more especially in the last days of His ministry, were constantly propounding in their efforts to entrap Him. In reply Jesus uses words from the Book of Genesis. Just as St Paul undercuts the Law of Moses by his appeal to the faith of Abraham, so the Lord refuses to discuss marriage on any other basis than the constitution and course of Nature. As Christians we can do no more. As Christians we can be content with nothing less.

1. What is the meaning of the question, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' Even in the English it is manifest that the words are ambiguous. If 'lawful' means 'legal' the inquiry would indeed have been useless, not to say fatuous. About the legality of the practice there could be no two opinions. Jesus made His questioners themselves tell Him what the Mosaic Law commanded. The Law is found in the Book of Deuteronomy. 'When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her,' so the provision runs, 'then it shall be, if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.' What material for lawyers to argue, what a text for theologians to torment, was afforded by the vague and indeterminate clause, 'because he hath found some unseemly thing'! We can readily perceive how judicious interpretation could make the Mosaic code an easy yoke and light burden for conforming Jews. And indeed they were not slow to see their advantage. If Rabbi Shammai took the strict line of prohibiting divorce for any cause except adultery, Hillel, a no less venerated teacher, went to the other extreme and permitted it for bad cookery. Between these opinions there were various intermediate stages. Most held that confirmed childlessness was a thing unseemly; some that a man was justified in dismissing his wife if he met a woman who pleased him more. The Law allowed divorce, but it could be, and was made, a matter of interpretation among the Jewish schools where the line was to be drawn.

But what were the use, or even the relevancy, of inquiring whether Shammai, or Hillel, or Akiba or some other learned in the Law and the testimony were the truest exponent of a difficult text in Deuteronomy? That is not the question the Pharisees were asking. In the English it is ambiguous. In the Greek there cannot be any doubt about it at all. 'Do you think,' they said to Jesus, 'that divorce is right?' Of course it must be right because the Law of Moses admits it, and that Law given by God on Sinai is the final and absolute standard of right and wrong. For this the Pharisees stood. To this official Jewry was committed. Now this was precisely the issue which from the first divided Jesus and the Jews, and which reached its ultimate decision in the Cross of Calvary. They suspected that the Nazarene was unorthodox about what for them was the ultimate fact of religion. Their attitude towards Him from first to last was identical when they accused Him of Sabbath-breaking in the synagogue at Capernaum, as when they suborned false witnesses to prove in His trial at Jerusalem that He was out to destroy the Temple. For more important even than to know the mind of Jesus on the Sabbath, or divorce, or any of the subjects which afforded the material for these controversies, is it to recognize the real issues in the great conflict which is thus presented in its successive stages. It was just this—whether the Law of Moses was the last word in religion, or whether the knowledge of God and fellowship with His Spirit was not offered to men through the disclosure and fulfilment of His mind and will in Him who is the Word and Son of the Father. Our recognition of the true values of Christianity depends upon our grasping the situation. The struggle by no means closed with the death of Jesus. It reappeared in the conflicts of the Apostolic Age. 'He hath spoken words against

this holy place and the law,' was the indictment of the first martyr. Upon the same issue turns the whole of St Paul's teaching about the opposition between Law and Grace. The battle is not ended, nor will it end so long as the present order of things endures. It revolves to-day, as it revolved in the days of His flesh, upon the answer which men give to the demand always implied in the challenge of the personality of Jesus, 'Whom do men say that I am?' 'What think ye of Christ; whose son is he?' Is God just the giver of laws? Or has He been unveiling the great spiritual principles on which life rests in a manifestation of Himself which reaches its culminating point in the teaching, the life, the Cross of Jesus the Messiah? That is the issue.

'Is it right for a man to put away his wife?' was the fateful question put to Jesus. The suspicion aroused by His treatment of the Sabbath was again excited by His utterances concerning marriage. The guardians of orthodoxy professed themselves shocked by His breaking the Sabbath, by His forgiving sins, by His refusing to Israelites their immemorial heritage of divorce. The scandal had no parallel. Jesus well knew that the issue with which He was now confronted was that on which He must ultimately fight to the death. But He was far too wise to let His enemies choose the ground. If He was not going to Golgotha because His followers plucked the ears of corn, neither would He mount the Cross because the Jews claimed the right to a bill of divorcement. No one should take His life from Him. He would lay it down of Himself when the cause for which He died was so plain that none could mistake it. So the Lord at once removes the problem from that narrow world of social institutions and statutory enactments in which the malice of His foes would gladly have confined it, into that larger universe of natural fact and spiritual reality in which He Himself habitually moved. By a brilliant turning of the tables He makes His enemies open the discussion by reciting the very statute they were holding in reserve to crush the presumptuous folly of which they vainly hoped He would be guilty, thus revealing how entirely He grasped the import of the inquiry addressed to Him. 'For your hardness of heart,' He says, 'Moses gave this law.' Jesus prepares the way for looking at marriage in the light of the principles of order rooted in the constitution and course of Nature; not by repudiating Moses, but by enunciating the value, not only of a particular enactment but of Law itself as the discipline of character not yet attuned to its own highest good. While the eye of man is too dull, his will too infirm, his heart too hard to know and seek and love what makes for liberty and life, the riot of desires and impulses must submit to external restraint.

2. It can be fairly asserted that our Lord never intended to establish a positive marriage law in the Christian Church. Had He done so, it would not only have been contrary to His general method of informing the consciences of men, but it would have been inconsistent with what seems to be the great principles by which God discloses His will. To assert that He did so legislate serves only to darken counsel and to prevent that recognition of the mind of the Master which is essential to any true surrender to His authority. Men rightly resent any attempt to foreclose the rational solution of a moral problem by requiring obedience to a positive statute that has not convinced the enlightened conscience. We may remember that the teaching with which we are dealing recurs in the Sermon on the Mount, and that fact alone should give us pause before we interpret it on any principles that would not equally apply to all the subjects which Christ illuminates in that Divine discourse.

With a flash of that spiritual insight which was never known to fail, the Lord draws from the sacred volume which contained the Mosaic legislation, and which was itself known as the Law, His own amazing teaching concerning the sexual union, which, while it neither lays down precepts nor even deals with matrimony considered as an institution of organized human society, presents a view of wedded life with which the strictness neither of Hebrew nor indeed of any other marriage law could for a moment be compared. 'In the beginning,' He says, speaking of human nature under conditions which anticipate all the laws and customs of society, 'God made them,' not husband and wife, not even man and woman, but 'male and female.' What is here before the mind of Jesus is the physical fact of sex and the union to which it leads. What Jesus meant to affirm was this: that, where once this union was

effected, the relationship established by it henceforth existed in the very nature of things, bearing no analogy to an association in work, a partnership in business, or even a bond of friendship.

¶ Nowadays a popular view is to talk disparagingly of Christ's ruling as of a quaintly old-fashioned notion which the modern world has quite outgrown and definitely left behind. The United States considers itself a Christian nation, yet blatantly it pays little or no attention to Christ's mind upon this subject. What does it matter what He held? We know far better nowadays! And so with open eyes they have gone back to the very kind of thing from which He lifted us. It is easy fastening on vivid and distressing cases to build up a plea. Is a woman to be tied for life to a drunkard or a criminal or a lunatic? That is, indeed, a fearsome fate. And yet society must come before the individual. And where the sanctity of the marriage tie is loosened, civilization crumbles. 'For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health,' that is a covenant touched by the glow and splendour and chivalry of love. But to make a business contract which, if it does not pay us dividends in comfort big enough to please us, we immediately dissolve, that is not to pass ahead of Christ, but to slip far below the level that He set us. The full flowering time of His teaching in the world is not over and past; it lies still far ahead.[1]

What Jesus did was not to legislate in matters matrimonial, but to arouse and stimulate conscience. As ever, He set the truth in a plain and clear light, to which the unsophisticated conscience can respond. And millions have responded and will continue to respond to its heroism and severity. And though, as Jesus Himself must well have understood when He gave His teaching, a nuptial law which disallowed divorce could never have a place in practical politics, nevertheless whatever tends to weaken this conscience cannot claim to be Christian, nor are those who would impugn it the true friends of the human race.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Hero in Thy Soul*, 135.

Christ and the Child

Mark x. 13, 14.—'And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.'

THIS account of the little children brought to Jesus is one of the eternal stories. So long as there are homes on earth, so long will this tale in its exquisite simplicity be told, binding the hearts of parents and children to the heart of the Son of God. A curious expression occurs in the story that follows, that of the rich young ruler. He was not the sort of man, we should think, to be impressed by this gathering of little ones and their mothers. Rather an important young person, he seems, seen perhaps a good deal in the town. But he is so drawn to this other young man walking through Perea—to something gracious, wonderful, Godlike about Him—that in himself the heart of the boy rises to meet Jesus, and he comes *running*. You remember Browning's exquisite lines:

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
  That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
  Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
  Another still, to quiet and retrieve.[1]

Something of this feeling is in the story of Jesus blessing the little ones. We almost envy them. We want to be where they were that He might take us and caress us and tell us of His love.

Perea was a half foreign place in a sort of jungle region of the Holy Land. It was a Jewish country between two alien Gentile provinces. As Jesus had found people at Nazareth, so He found the women here. In some of them there was hopelessness. Their lives were faded; there was little to which to look forward. Yet these were but the more passionate for their children's lives. So women came to Him that He might comfort them and draw their children to His feet. The East is full of the occult and the dangerous. And here was a stranger, a

[1] *The Guardian-Angel.*

man reputed to have mysterious powers. Naturally suspicious, they might have folded their children in their garments, as from the evil eye. But about Jesus there was something that there had never been about anybody. It is remarkable testimony to Him that they trusted entirely what He should do with their little ones. What did they want? The thoughts of a boy may be far, far thoughts. But the thoughts of a mother go farther still. Jesus knew their desire and met it. The old Greeks put the baby into the hollow of his father's shield, that he might be protected or that he might catch his father's valour. Jesus took the children up in His arms, and they looked into His face.

1. The mystery and pathos of a baby's life, fresh from the Creator's hands, set us wondering. What tremendous destinies hang on these feeble threads of life? What possibilities are here wrapped up, of joy, suffering, laughter, tears, temptation yielded to or overcome, of shame, of honour? And meanwhile, how utterly trustful, uncritical, sensitive, is the tiny life. Every touch left on the spirit remains. And for all this parents are responsible. For certain days they will stand for God to their children. For certain days they will stand to them for love. In some dim way these Perean mothers may have felt these things. So they brought the children to Jesus to get His understanding of the child. This is a perpetual paradox of life. Parenthood is awful yet blessed. The disciples of Jesus would have kept the children from Him. To them they were an interruption. This bringing of the children was merely child's play, hardly befitting the occasion. But play counts for more than business. Art is play. Love is play. The home is play. The day's work may cover art with dust, may crowd out beauty, may sometimes even deny love. When we are old we may play for money; but when we are young we play for love of the game. If we could cease being so important, so busy with money-making, and could get back to the love of children, how much nearer we should be to Christ's heart.

¶ It was the stern scholar Jonathan Edwards who prayed 'that he might be led as a little child through the wilderness of this world.' And this gentle, childlike spirit we recognize as perhaps the noblest element in his sombre character. Poor old Thomas Carlyle! If only children could have had access to his life to shatter his pompous solemnities and break up the glacial crust that overlay his real tenderness of heart! But he was too much like Peter and John, and many things were hidden from him in consequence.[1]

2. In our day there has been a great discovery of the child. The State spends enormous sums of money upon the education of the young. Parents recognize the value of a good start for their children. The Church realizes that whatever is neglected it must not be the work of the Sunday School. We have had it shown to us by statistics that a big proportion of our Church members owe everything to the vision of Christ which they had in early years. 'Youth,' says R. L. Stevenson, 'is the time to be converted at a revival meeting.' And Bishop Selwyn, preaching at one of our great public schools, once said: 'Give me this chapel full of converted boys, and I will convert the world.'

¶ In this recognition of the value of the child one Eastern country at least has now nothing to learn from the West. Benjamin Kidd in his book, *The Science of Power*, regards the development of Japan as one of the most remarkable features of our times, and asserts that it is the struggle of Japan for the mind of the young which occupies consistently the attention of the leaders of that nation. He also shows how Germany, through the educational system imposed upon the young, was transformed from a nation of peace lovers into a military people with extravagant imperialistic ideals. 'It is the mind of the child,' says Mr Kidd, 'which constitutes the basal fact upon which the social integration is being reared.' And then in some very interesting pages he points out that 'the type of face amongst peoples of advanced civilization is quite distinctive in its youthfulness. Progress from savagery to civilization is marked by an increasing youthfulness of appearance.' He goes to art and literature for illustrations, and says that 'the instinctive perception of the superiority and of the supremacy of the child mind in civilization is witnessed in all the higher phases of Western literature.' All of which very forcibly reminds us of the saying

[1] H. Kingman, *Building on Rock*, 95.

of Jesus : ' Except ye turn and become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

3. The child gives us a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven, of a new race that never will grow old ; for men will enter more and more like children into the Kingdom. The time will come when no one will lose his freshness, will be blasé or old before his time ; for the cleansing and sweetening of earth is in the hands of the child. Taking these little ones in His arms, Jesus identified them with Himself. His power of sympathy stretched out near and far, gathering into the bosom of His life His mother, the blind man of Jerusalem, the leper, the outcast, We feel His infinity in every contact. ' Before Abraham was, I am,' He who grasped all time in His eternal hands understands these mothers, and says of their children : ' Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Let us teach our children the meaning of baptism. Once they have been in the arms of Jesus. Let us trust them in His arms—trust Him with our dead child, and trust Him with the living child over whom our heart is anxious. Suffer the children to come. Do not let us force them, or thrust them violently toward the Jesus we have known. They will never find Jesus exactly as we have found Him. That cannot be. They must live in conditions, social and intellectual, that we have not known. We must trust them as well as Him.

4. Our Lord's invitation to come is for us all. Let us forget our age. How old are you—sixty ? Then go take thy bill quickly and write down six. We must be young again to enter His Kingdom. It always comes to that. Colonel Newcome, as he died, answered, ' Adsum ! ' a schoolboy at the end. We ask our Lord to pray for us. He does more. We grope through the mists of adult life, feeling their chill, but He makes us feel at home in His arms. Salvation lies not in our grasp of Him, but in His grasp of us. Always there will be other minds frowning on our simplicity, the business, the intellectual, the cynical point of view, smiling a bitter little smile and calling this play. But Christ rebukes the cynical spirit, and bids us keep the heart of a child.

¶ Lowell was walking with a friend along a country road, when they came upon a large building which bore the inscription, ' Home for Incurable Children.' ' They'll take me there some day,' was the half-humorous comment of a sensitive man, to whom life brought great sorrows, but who retained to the very end a youthful buoyancy, courage, and faculty of finding delight in common things.[1]

> Look at Browning ! how he keeps
> In the seventies still a heart
> That never sleeps.
> Still an art
> Full of youth's own grit and power ;
> Thoughts we deemed to boys belonging,
> The Springtime's flower,
> Love and longing.

Childlikeness

Mark x. 14.—' Of such is the kingdom of God.'

It is a beautiful conception, daring and fresh as it is beautiful, that the one attribute of all the citizens of God must be the possession of the childlike heart. We need not be learned, though it is good to be learned ; we need not be gifted, though we should thank God for gifts. But we must be childlike ; that is the one necessity. Christ takes an unalterable stand on that.

Now of course to be childlike is one thing ; and it is quite another to be childish. To be childlike is to have the spirit of the child, to have the touch of the Divine about us still. It is to live freshly in a glad fresh world, with a thousand avenues into the everywhere out of this dull spot that we call *now*. But to be childish is to be immature ; to have no grip of things, never to face facts squarely ; and he is a poor Christian who lives so. In understanding, says the Apostle, I would have you men. It is one distinguishing glory of our Lord that He looked the worst in the face, and called it bad. But the guileless heart, and the soul that can serve and sing, because there is love and home and fatherland about it—all that is childlike—like the children—and of such is the Kingdom of God.

There can be little doubt, too, that in claiming the child-spirit Jesus was reaching up to the very highest in man. ' Wisdom,' says Words-

[1] H. W. Mabie, *Books and Culture*, 177.

worth in his own quiet way—so helpful in these noisy days—' Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop, than when we soar'; and Jesus, stooping to the little children, was really rising to the crown of life. Read the biographies of the great—the men who were morally and nobly great—and in every one of them you will find tokens and traces of the childlike heart. It is the middle-men, the worldly middle-men, the men of one talent who bury it in the napkin, it is *these* who are locked into their prison-house, and have lost the happy daring of the child. Great souls, with the ten talents flaming into genius, live in a world that is so full of God that men say they are imprudent, careless; and Jesus sees that they are little children. Someone has defined a genius as a man who keeps unsullied through the stern teaching of the years the spirit of the child. There is genius in childhood; there is childhood in genius too.

1. What characteristics of the child life ought we to suppose that our Lord had chiefly in His mind when He said, ' of such is the kingdom of God ' ?

(1) *Receptiveness.*—The child lives eagerly, vividly, turning from one experience to another, sensitive to all, interested in all, enjoying all with a freshness and keenness that is lost in later life. It is the time of eager questioning, of intense curiosity, of the pure love of new knowledge; and this is apt to be lost. We shut the book and we learn no more. We seem to have finished and to be satisfied. We have lost the quick interest, the keen desire for something more and something new. That is not childlike, and it is not Christian. In the days of His ministry Christ met this difficulty in many of the people He fain would have taught. As He said, ' their eyes were closed and their ears stopped.' He could not penetrate the obscurantism of the Pharisees with one shaft of His light, with one of His bright new ideas. How much they lost because they would not sit round like little children ' hearing and asking questions ' ! They had lost this open-mindedness. They had shut the windows; and a child's windows are never shut.

¶ We should try to be open to *all* the higher interests. If Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius were right in saying that ' our rank in the scale of being is determined entirely by the objects in which we are interested '; if the German mystics were right in saying, ' What we see, that we are '—then our very life must consist in freshness of interest, in quickness of eye and ear to see the finger of God everywhere, and hear His voice.[1]

How receptive children are ! Literally, how ready to receive, to take quickly with open hands whatever we have to give, never fancying they must give something in return, and never uncomfortable because they give nothing in return. People grow away from that. ' I take nothing that I don't pay for; I'm obliged to nobody; I give as much as I get and keep square accounts.' Not so the child: and it fits him for the Kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace—of great gifts. In a kingdom of grace we need to be receptive, not pretending or contending that we pay for what we get, not unwilling to be debtors, frankly dependent—not distrustful of the heart which bestows, as if we questioned its goodness, not finding the bounties irksome which love provides. Mark the receiving of a gift by a little child—frank and open, gladly taking it and enjoying it, unhindered by any reluctance. That is how we should be to God, whose Kingdom is a kingdom of grace.

(2) *Trust.*—There is an exquisite purity about the faith of children; sometimes they make us ashamed—they trust us so. Distrust comes when we get older and the spirit of the child dies out of us. There come suspicion, questioning, slowness to give our confidence, till we may reach that unlovely type of character, always suspicious, if not sneering at men, and saying, ' It is always safest to believe the worst about them.' So completely may the child die out of the man, and the man depart from Christ and the Kingdom.

How trustful ! Especially at home, in that life so sheltered and provided and led, what frank and confident dependence ! With never a shadow of doubt or distrust, content and careless, taking a great deal for granted, and leaving it where it will surely be looked after—that is a child's wisdom. Children are born believers: and along the lines of confidence their blessings travel. The child knows nothing else till the child-spirit begins to die out of it. We need to grow into unbelief.[2]

[1] W. R. Inge.
[2] J. Rutherford, *The Seer's House*, 161.

A tender child of summers three,
Seeking her little bed at night,
Paused on the dark stair timidly.
'Oh, mother! take my hand,' said she,
'And then the dark will all be light.'

We older children grope our way
From dark behind to dark before;
And only when our hands we lay,
Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day,
And there is darkness nevermore.

Reach downward to the sunless days
Wherein our guides are blind as we,
And faith is small and hope delays;
Take Thou the hands of prayer we raise,
And let us feel the light of Thee! [1]

(3) *Wonder.*—The child is above all else a wonderer, and is set in the centre of a wonderful world. There is nothing common or unclean for children; all things are big with wonder. The rolling of the wagon in the street, and the gathering banks of cloud down by the sunset; and the opening flower, and the father's morning kindness, and the mother's stories, and the birthday joy—the little magicians so trick them out with glory that they make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. Childhood, as one of our poets sang, is—

The hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower.

¶ Thomas Traherne tells us how the world appealed to him in his own childhood: 'The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold. The green trees transported and ravished me; their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap. . . . And young men seemed glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the streets were moving jewels: I knew not that they were born or should die.'

¶ Child-minded George Macdonald has caught and expressed with genuine insight the child's feeling of wonder, awe, mystery, and Divine reality:

I also am a child and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze upon the starry sky
And then I must not speak.

For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
The Infinite of God.

What a poor thing is life when the wonder of it all passes away! There is a magnificent sermon by John Ker, that master in the great art of spiritual preaching, and this is the title of it, 'God's word suited to man's sense of wonder.' 'I had rather,' said Ruskin, 'live in a cottage and wonder at everything than live in Warwick Castle and wonder at nothing.' We have all felt the *trials* of existence; let us seek to feel the *wonder* of it now; and the great wonder that the Lord should be our Shepherd, and should have died upon Calvary for us.

2. The dangerous thing in life, and the disastrous thing, is that we do not keep the childlike temper as the years increase. The spirit of the child dies out of us.

Christ says it may come back—we may be changed, 'converted'; and again He says we may be 'born again.' As the old Psalm promises, our youth may be renewed. This doctrine of conversion, of regeneration, of beginning life again as God's children, meets a craving of the soul, a real felt want. There is something we have lost, whatever we have gained in life. We look back, catching glimpses of that old self and that old life, only to feel how far away it is, and how hopeless the effort to recover it. But this is the gospel and the promise. Christ would not ask it, He would not make it indispensable, if it were impossible.

It is the power of His life; it is the power of His Spirit—to renew and restore and give us back what we have lost. It was the blessing He brought to the world—that old, hard, weary, worn-out world. He put new life into it. He made the world young again. It is the blessing He still brings to every soul that believes in Him and loves Him and lives beside Him.

[1] Whittier.

The Rich Young Ruler

Mark x. 17.—'And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'

This incident—one of the most moving in the Gospels—is told by three out of the four Evangelists. No doubt the young ruler had often listened to the teaching of Jesus and been deeply impressed by the beauty of His words and actions. Then one day his eagerness overpowers his sense of personal dignity, and he comes running to the place of meeting. His warm admiration for the Prophet of Nazareth makes him oblivious of the esteem to which he was accustomed from his official position, and he kneels at the feet of Jesus.

1. What brought the young ruler to Jesus? He was rich and he had been well brought up. His home had clearly been one where the possession of riches was not allowed to obscure the sense of obligation and duty. There is no word or suggestion in the story of the selfishness or insolence which sometimes goes with great wealth. His parents had been godly Jewish parents, and they had brought him up in the law. He had applied himself diligently and conscientiously to the duties of his station. He must have been like St Paul, who 'profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers,' and said that he was, 'touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.' But somehow he had come to feel this conscientious, busy life singularly unsatisfying, and when he came to know something of Jesus, he felt that here was a man who had a secret of which he understood nothing, whose life was stayed on something far deeper than was his. *His* life was frittered away on a round of petty obligations. When they were all fulfilled, they seemed to come to very little. This man had something which was concerned with the eternal, and that was the only thing which could satisfy him.

It is well to notice that Christ does not despise this morality of 'my station and its duties.' His immediate answer to the young man's question, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' is, 'Thou knowest the commandments.'

Jesus was known as the friend of publicans and sinners, the disreputable elements of the society of His time. He was also known as the consistent enemy of the representatives of respectability, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He did think that the sins of complacent and intolerant respectability were far more deadly to the human spirit than sins of intemperance and weakness. But no one knew better that the spirit of freedom and creativeness in conduct demanded submission and self-sacrifice. The originality and the freedom of Jesus' life did not rest on any contemptuous disregard of moral or political obligation. He came, He said, not to destroy but to fulfil the law. The revolution He was effecting lay not in His seeing less in the law and commandments than the teachers of His time, but in His seeing far more than they saw or were prepared to see—in His profound and impassioned belief that through the laws and regulations of His people could be seen the veritable laws of God. And the law seen so, looked not *at* but *through*, seen not as a fixed form but as a living embodiment of the spirit that had inspired it, became at once something that could never be fulfilled by any meticulous observances, but only by a constantly renewed understanding and interpretation. Only so could human laws make possible the more abundant life that was Jesus' inspiration. He is always warning his hearers against 'the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.' He knew how easily men come to attach an entirely unreal importance to the machinery of life, and forget the simple human purposes for which alone all the machinery of organized life exists. He saw how the organization which is meant to bring men together is often used to divide men, and makes them forget their unity as brothers and sons of one Father. He loved the young man because He saw that he had none of that complacency which great possessions and respectability so often engender, and that he had begun to feel that a man's life is not in the abundance of the things that he has, nor in the duties he performs, and that he had still to learn how to inherit eternal life.

2. 'What lack I yet?' It was because Jesus loved the young man that He made the high, hard demand that followed. If he wished to complete his life he was to give up life as he

had so far known it, to sell what he had and give to the poor and follow Him; share the life of a man who did not know from day to day where He would lodge; form one of a small company of men, most of them of humble origin, who had given up their business to share His wandering life. That meant, of course, immediate sacrifice and renunciation, and Jesus knew that it did. 'Take up the cross and follow Me,' was part of what He had to say. But Jesus is far from preaching renunciation for its own sake. The young man had come to him wanting something, and Jesus saw that he wanted it, and showed him how to get it. He was dissatisfied with the life he had lived so far, and Jesus knew that he would go on being dissatisfied with it. The only hope for him was to believe enough in the spirit that had moved him to come, to follow its guidance all the way, and, like the man in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'to put his fingers in his ears and run on, crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life.' [1]

What lack you yet? A pathway, do you want,
Of noble struggle after perfect good?
A chance I give you: leave your cherished sphere
Of virtuous deeds; sell all and follow Me.

But the call found the young ruler unprepared. The demand was more than he felt able to supply. The *one* thing which he was to do proved to be an endless labour, the acquisition of the inheritance was a life-long task. The eager look passes from his face, and the shadow of a great disappointment darkens his brow. He turned away sorrowful.

¶ There she sat, queen of her home. She was a Saivite, and the golden symbol of her god had been branded upon her shoulder, and she was sworn to lifelong devotion to Siva; but she had found that he was vain, and she never worshipped him. She worshipped God alone: 'and at night, when the household is sleeping, I go up alone to an upper room, and stretch out my hands to the God of all, and cry with a long, loud cry.' 'Tell me, is that enough?' she said. 'Is it all I must do for salvation? Say!'

I did not feel she was ready for a plunge into the deep sea of full knowledge yet, and I tried to persuade her to leave that question, telling her that our Lord Himself would explain to her all that it meant to follow Him. But she was determined to hear it then, and, as she insisted, I read her a little of what He says about it Himself. She knew quite enough to understand and take in the force of the forceful words. She would not consent to be led gently on. 'No, I must know it now,' she said; and as verse by verse we read to her, her face settled sorrowfully. 'So far must I follow, so far?' she said. '*I cannot follow so far.*' [1]

3. When we come to ask the question that the young man asked, we are not likely to fall into the mistake of thinking Christ's advice in its literal form a universal recipe. But we know that we cannot assume either that we shall be, or that we cannot possibly be, called upon to do as this young man was told to do. What we can and do know is that we should sit loose enough to our small worlds of enjoyments and cares and occupations to hear and obey the call to fuller life when it comes, whatever it may be.

¶ 'Never fear to let go,' he says in his philosophical notes; 'it is the only means of getting better things—self-sacrifice. Let go; let go; we are sure to get back again. How science touches the lesson of morals, which is ever, Give up, give up; deny yourself—not this everlasting getting; deny yourself, and give, and infinitely more shall be yours; but *give*—not bargaining; give from love, because you must. And if the question will intrude, "What shall I have if I give up this?" relegate that question to faith, and answer, "I shall have God. In my giving, in my love, God, who is Love, gives Himself to me."' [2]

The point of this incident is that the religion of Jesus is not a narcotic but a challenge. It is an appeal to the heroic—that is, an appeal to youth. Too often it has been made a soft and cushioned faith, a refuge of the weak, the timid, the devout and retiring. Garibaldi, in his last appeal for recruits for the battle for a new Italy, promised his men hardship, hunger, danger, and even death, and they responded with a shout. No less challenging, no less thrilling, is the call of Christ to the youth of the world. Whoso elects to follow Him walks

[1] A. D. Lindsay, *The Nature of Religious Truth*, 40.

[1] Amy Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are*, 74.
[2] *Life and Letters of James Hinton*, 206.

a way beset by many a peril, asking for all that a man has of fortitude and of faith.

¶ They tell us that in Georgia, as the result of generations of more or less constant warfare, their greeting in the morning is no tame 'Good day,' but 'Victory'; and that one answers, 'May the victory be yours!' That is the fighting spirit with which Christians face their lives.[1]

For sheer courage—gallant and magnificent—a herald of the Cross landing on a savage coast, unarmed save with a story of love and pity, is not surpassed in the annals of human heroism. And not only in far places of the world, but in the city and in society, a like heroism is demanded of anyone who would follow Jesus. Those who seek a moral equivalent of war, something to challenge the chivalry and courage of strong men, find their opportunity in a society in large part pagan, atheistic, and at enmity with the spirit and gospel of Jesus. For the Christian patriot and man of business must set himself to change the system to something which will really allow the spirit of Christ to have adequate scope, else our religion is alien to the realities of life, as ineffective as the dream of a dream. To do this we must face a chloroforming conventionality as subtle and deadly as the gas in the trenches of Flanders. The demand of to-day, as of old, is for men like the rich young ruler—men who work the present system, whose hands are on its levers, who occupy its strong places—to care to make trial of the way of Jesus, at any cost. It may seem hard, as it did to the rich young ruler; but He who calls us to His high quest tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden light—lighter by far than the hard way of the world, where heart treads on heart.

Make me to hear clearly one thing,
Thy voice,
And hearing, to follow, respond,
And rejoice.

Make me to see clearly one thing,
Thy way,
And seeing, to walk at Thy hand
Day by day.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Hero in Thy Soul*, 71.

The Goodness of Jesus

Mark x. 18.—'Why callest thou me good?'

Men often asked Jesus questions. Some of those questions were wise and some of them were foolish, but to them all Jesus gave great and sublime answers. But sometimes Jesus asked questions on His own account, and His questions search the great deeps of the soul. 'Why callest thou me good?' was His question to the rich young ruler. What value do you attach to the conception of the Good? There is none good but One, even God. The Good is a much bigger conception than you have yet realized. In its perfection it is found only in God.

Good?
Distrust that word.
'There is none good save God,' said Jesus Christ.
. . . . . .
The word's grown dangerous. . . . We all have known
Good critics who have stamped out poet's hopes,
Good statesmen who pulled ruin on the state,
Good patriots who for a theory risked a cause,
Good kings who disembowelled for a tax,
Good popes who brought all good to jeopardy,
Good Christians who sate still in easy chairs
And damned the general world for standing up—
Now may the good God pardon all good men![1]

Christ's question is intended to enable the man to see that his thought is not deep enough, nor his life strenuous enough for the task which lies before him. There is the clear indication of a shallowness of thought in the conception of some good thing to be done to obtain the life he needs, which betrays very little acquaintance with the deeper meaning of the eternal life he seeks. His conception of the moral ideal must be deepened if he is to become conscious of the lack in his nature. His mind must be turned from the thought of some definite thing to be accomplished, which will secure for him a great inheritance, if he is to enter upon the deeper and higher life for which he craves. It is the perception of the relation of the good to God which transforms morality into religion; it is the possession of a spirit,

[1] E. B. Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, bk. iv.

not the performance of an act, which enriches a man with the life which is eternal.[1]

1. There was *the necessity of discrimination as to the nature of goodness.* It was a very needful counsel in those days. For there were two competing types of goodness between which men had to choose—that of Jesus and that of the rabbis and scribes. What a difference! How incompatible! How idle to call any man good until it was settled which of the two types of goodness was intended. 'Good Master'—but is it after the fashion of the rabbis, or after the new fashion of the Prophet of Nazareth? Jesus avoids the negative way of His contemporaries, in which holiness consisted mainly in avoiding sin, a way wonderfully prolific in breeding spiritual pride and moral blindness. His ways and thoughts differed radically from those of most Jews on all subjects pertaining to morals and religion—the Kingdom of God, the Messianic hope, and most of all as to the nature of righteousness. Rabbinical goodness consisted largely in observing innumerable minute rules regarding washing, fastings, Sabbath-keeping, and tithe-paying, and the like, and in being self-satisfied on account of their observances. Scrupulosity, vanity, contempt—these made up the current ideal of holiness as embodied in the Pharisaic character. If we turn to Jesus what a contrast we see. Not only is there a total lack of conformity to the Pharisaic type, but a very pronounced antipathy to it. This, indeed, is the first mark of the new type of goodness—an intense hatred of insincerity. The merely conventional and formal was hateful to Jesus. He demanded reality—truth in the inward parts. If there was one thing He loathed more than another it was pretence, formalism; what He called hypocrisy. Our speech must be sincere, for it is an insult to Him who is the Truth to speak to Him or about Him in words which are insincere. Jesus answered the prayer of the man who could only stammer out, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' But there were some who called Him 'Lord, Lord,' of whom He said: 'I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'

Help me, my God, to speak
True words to Thee each day;
True let my voice be when I praise,
And trustful when I pray.

[1] Bernard Lucas, *Conversations with Christ*, 185.

Thy words are true to me,
Let mine to Thee be true,
The speech of my whole heart and soul,
However low and few.

2. Another feature in the goodness of Christ was *humanity, and intense sympathy with the poor, the sinful, the outcasts of society.* One of His chief grounds of quarrel with the traditional type of goodness was that it was inhuman, did not care for the people, but despised them as ignorant and profane, and abandoned them to neglect, not grieved by their moral degradation, but pleased rather by the contrast it presented to their own holiness. Jesus loved the people, pitied them, taught them, healed them, kept company with them, exposing Himself in so doing to suspicion and misrepresentation, regardless of the evil that might be thought of Himself if only He might by such brotherliness comfort, gladden, and win to goodness the depressed, the unfriended, and the erring. Such was the new type of goodness. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men. Jesus sought to make other men as He was, sons of God, and as such full of peace and gladness.

¶ Maggie Tulliver says to her brother, Tom: 'You have no pity: you have no sense of your own imperfections and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard; it is not fitting for a mortal—for a Christian. You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues—you think they are great enough to win you everything else.'[1]

3. Another feature in the goodness of Christ was *utter freedom from all religious scrupulosity.* It came out in His mode of keeping the Sabbath, and in His neglect of the traditionary rules of the Scribes. This free way of life which Jesus practised Himself and taught His disciples was simply a better way of serving God, springing out of a different idea of God from that cherished by the Scribes. The Scribes had no real faith in the goodness of God. They thought of Him as a severe, exacting taskmaster, whose commands were not only high and difficult, but grievous. Hence they served Him in fear, lest by the most minute departure from the bare letter of the law they should incur the Divine displeasure and its attendant penalties. Jesus,

[1] *The Mill on the Floss.*

on the contrary, had the most absolute faith in God's goodness. He habitually thought and spoke of God as a Father, and He loved and served God as a Son, cheerfully, devotedly, and without fear, regarding His will as good and perfect, and not doubting that He judged of conduct graciously and wisely, setting value not on outward conformity to mechanical rules but on the inward spirit. The rabbis feared that God would be angry if they did not pay their tithes with such exactness as to include among the taxable articles garden herbs such as mint, anise, and cummin. To Christ this was incredible. He believed that God's displeasure rested on selfishness, pride, cruelty, injustice, falsehood, not on petty breaches of man-made rules, invented to be a hedge about the law. A wholesome creed, fruitful in results. It emancipates the soul from the bondage of tradition. It clears away the cobwebs of old custom and gives men a fresh start in piety, saying, in effect: 'Old things have passed away; artificiality, formality, mechanicalism, ceremonialism are at an end; now serve God rationally, freely, enthusiastically, with all your mind, heart, and soul.'

¶ Dr A. Clutton-Brock says: 'The unnatural man, whom Christ found in the Scribes and Pharisees, was to Him far worse than the natural man. The natural man needed to learn, but the unnatural man needed to unlearn. Christ was always trying to break down in men the sense of a duty imposed. Traditions, duties, are imposed upon the mass of men, and they obey them from fear, from ignorance, from mere thoughtlessness. For them Christ has only pity, but He had curses for those who imposed those duties on men, who obeyed their own pride, their own will-to-power, their own lonely and egotistical fears, and who forced others to obey them. It would be better for them if a millstone had been hung round their necks and they had been cast into the sea.'

4. Another feature in the goodness of Christ is *His great humility*. Vanity, ostentation, thirst for flattery were conspicuous elements of the Pharisaic character. 'All their works they do for to be seen of men; they love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues and greetings in the markets.' So it was in the days of our Lord; and so it has been in every age. The incense of flattery has ever been dear to the Pharisaic heart. The difference between the two types of goodness, the Pharisaic and the Christian, is radical and arresting. The Pharisee desires his goodness to be seen of men. The Christian is content that his be seen of God, in accordance with the counsels of the Master to pray, fast, give alms in secret. He will not indeed object to his good works being seen of men when they tend to glorify the Father in heaven. We can all see where Christ's goodness tended. It glorified God and benefited man. But what did it bring to Himself?—misunderstanding, reproach, crucifixion! 'Let your light so shine,' He says to us. Too often we read this with the 'so' omitted, as if the great matter were that the world should know we had a light. The great matter is that our light should *so* shine that God shall be glorified, and that may involve for us something very different from glory.

As we contemplate the life-long sacrifice of Jesus we cannot help contrasting our own compromises and weak love of comforts. We discover that our great concern is with ourselves, who stand in sore need of being saved from selfishness, pride, hypocrisy, and all manner of sin of the soul. Yet through it all there is the wonderful inspiration of His companionship. And we begin to love that life so unlike our own, and dare to claim our affinity with it, despite the shameful failure and contradiction of all that we are. We live our life for the new ends which He has taught us to love. And the more we live, the more we understand, and the more we love and worship.

Life Refused

Mark x. 22.—'And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.'

THE ordinary reader of the Gospel might give to this incident of the rich young ruler the sub-title, 'A Hard Test.' Dante, with keener insight, calls it 'The Great Refusal.' For it is exactly this common inability to see that the failure to meet the hard test is a great refusal of life that makes life's tragedy. We see the hardness of the test; Christ and Dante see the greatness of the life refused.

1. We are not told that this young man was angry or indignant at the demand of Christ, but that he was 'sad,' and went away grieved. There is no complaint against the reasonableness of Christ. Had he judged Christ's demand to be excessive, or if he had felt it was impracticable, he would have argued, or sneered, or stormed. That he went away 'sad' is a tribute alike to the justice of Christ and to the moral sensibility of his own soul. His grief was due not to Christ's unreasonableness, but to his own sense of ineptitude and unreadiness. For one brief moment his soul had been visited by the dream of a more perfect life, he had seen the rush of aspiration kindled by the dream, and then its dissolving and the return to the commonplace. Perhaps for the first time in his life he saw and approved more than he felt willing to obey. He detected, what within the narrower limits of his secluded life he had never found out, a wide gulf between his moral sensibilities and his moral determination. Hence the blight which fell upon his spirit. And because he was an honest man he did not attempt to evade the situation by throwing scorn upon Christ; he paid tribute to the truth, and pronounced judgment upon himself, in the grief and sadness with which he went away.

It has been too commonly supposed that this young man renounced religion and rejected Christ when he turned away, and that his grief lay in the sad sense of doom which ever after haunted him. But there is surely a truer and more suggestive interpretation of the memorable incident. Our Lord tacitly, if not explicitly, approved the young man's claim to have found the way of life so far as it was then understood and accepted. According to the light of his day, and in harmony with the provisions of the Mosaic dispensation, he honestly claimed, and Christ admitted, his place among the religious and the hopeful. The point at which his trouble began was where Christ turned the discussion on to the theme of spiritual culture and completeness. 'If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.' And it was because he felt himself unequal to this larger discipline and sacrifice that 'he went away sorrowful.' His grief was that of a vividly realized schism within his moral nature. His vision stretched beyond his readiness to follow; and it therefore became to him a haunting vision, filling him with uneasiness and self-reproach.

Is it not strange that such a nature should be saddened because Christ imparted a new and nobler ideal of life? The young man had still his title to life. He had all his old luxuries of study and service to go back to. He had, in addition to his rich and happy past, a new and most precious possession in the expressed approval of Christ. Could he not go back to his old life and be as happy and as useful as before? One can see room for a little passing disappointment in his sense of incompleteness, but surely he ought once more to be bright and cheery and contented? Nothing would seem easier or more rational—*on paper*; nothing, *in fact*, was less likely. The vision which he would not follow cast a shadow upon his heart and his lot. His whole past happiness discovered itself in the perfect adjustment of his visions and his activities. There was complete congruity between his sense of duty and his obedience to duty. Had he never seen Christ he could have continued happy in that smaller life he had so graciously filled. Or, having seen Christ, he could have gone from His presence undisturbed had he been of a less fine and subtle nature. But having seen Christ, having felt the kindling glow of Christ's gracious spirit, having perceived in the new life depicted the only adequate expression of his quickened vision, he must either go on with boldness or go back to emptiness and misery. That is a tragic dilemma of experience, which is rendered inevitable in proportion to the nobility and the freshness of our intellectual and moral nature.

¶ Every light of moral beauty, permitted to enter but not allowed to guide us, becomes, like the after-image of the sun when idly stared at, a dark speck upon the soul, which follows us at all our work, adheres to every object, approaches and recedes in dreams, and is neither evaded by movement nor washed out by tears. If the fairest gifts are not to be turned into haunting griefs, it can only be by following in the ways of duty and denial along which they manifestly lead.[1]

¶ May we not call this youth the Hamlet of the New Testament? What was it that drove Hamlet mad? His madness arose out of the breach between his perceptions and his apti-

[1] Martineau.

tudes, between his enlarged and haunting sense of duty and his faltering ability to face and fulfil it. Hamlet could have been happy under any one of three conditions—had he never been forced out of the quiet retreat of a simple and placid life; or, being so forced, had he possessed a rougher nature, not sensitive to moral appeal, seared and hardened by coarse contact with the world; or, having a healthy conscience, and recognizing sacred obligations, had he boldly obeyed the vision which called to duty. It was because he saw and felt more than he had nerve to execute that a discord arose which destroyed the symmetry and sanity of his mind.

2. We have a principle here which interprets one of the most striking features of the age—its unrest, its dissatisfaction, its undertone of sadness. That there is such a spirit abroad no close observer of life will question. It is discernible not less within our churches than in those wide and eager spheres of life which throb with the interests and industries of the world. Behind the thin veil of modern pleasure, business, politics, there is a sense of ineffectiveness leading to weariness. In many quarters men are living and working without the inspiration and the satisfaction which full and healthy life ought always to enjoy. 'Cui bono?' seems to be stamped upon many of the movements and many of the men of to-day. How is this? What is the secret of these used-up aspects and moods of life?

Some men tell us the secret lies in our loss of faith. They say men have given up God, and that life has been shut up within a narrow and debasing materialism. This diagnosis might have been true once, but it does not fit the present situation. Materialism as an interpretation of man is a played-out and discredited system of thought. It is not in consequence of such a hard and meagre view of life that man is struck with weariness. The scepticism and criticism of the past generation have made for clearer and nobler faith in God, in man, in life's significance and opportunity. And it is to this restored and enlarged faith we may trace our modern unrest. We have found God, but are not quite ready to render Him complete obedience. We have discovered as never before the wide and generous outline of a new heaven in a new earth which Jesus sketched—a kingdom of brothers, animated by mutual consideration and concession, dwelling together in peace and co-operation—but we hesitate to sell all we have of old ideas and practices, to take up the cross of self-renunciation and to follow the Lord into a new and nobler life. And there lies our trouble. We were happier when we knew less.

(1) Take, for illustration, the *great social and economic questions* which are agitating men to-day. Our fathers were perfectly happy under the old economy of supply and demand, of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. The system seemed to them natural and inevitable. But that idea has been dissipated. We have seen a loftier vision of man and life. It is now clear to all of us that a law of supply and demand whose operations surfeit one man and starve another is not a Divine law, not even a decently competent man-made device. Our vision has been enlarged. Our fathers were happy because of the congruity of their ideas and their activities. An incongruity has arisen through the enlargement of all economic into essentially moral questions. And because we are not ready yet to adapt our practices to the new and larger outlook, therefore are we suffering from a sense of emptiness and discontent. And that weary sadness will remain till the breach is healed.

(2) This same spirit of *unrest* is to be found *within the Churches*. It shows itself in a lack of healthy and contagious joy in our religion. There is no uncertainty in our faith. There is a wonderful revival of varied and gracious activity among Christian people. But there is little joy. The apostolic churches, while their faith and life were simple, were upheld and animated by an all-conquering spirit of gladness and rejoicing. To-day we possess our faith more intelligently, but our faith possesses us less effectively. What is the reason of this? Is it because our theology has become too broad to remain deep? Some men tell us so. That old simile of the river which is deepest where it is narrowest has been used so long as almost to have been accepted as a demonstration of the dangers attaching to theological advance. But the ocean is a truer simile, where breadth and depth give power and liberty. The freshly realized doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, for instance, carrying with it a new insight into the meaning and obliga-

tion of human brotherhood, has added to the number and urgency of Christian duties. It has enlarged and intensified the missionary enterprise of the Churches. It has widened the conception of what constitutes Divine service and religious work. It is inevitably the result of such swift enlargement of outlook that most people should hesitate to go forward. Old ideas are tenacious; old associations act like a sacred spell to check sacred development. There lies the source of modern unrest, in the breach between vision and duty. And there is only one way in which to heal it. Not by mocking or trying to forget the vision, but by bringing the activities of practical life into line with the new and nobler conception of life and duty.

3. This sadness which haunts the age is full of hope. It is a revelation that we are not a used-up and reprobate people. For it argues the presence of a heart and a conscience. A morally dead age might feel *bored*, but it could never be *grieved*. The restlessness which now afflicts us, while it proceeds from lack of moral courage, argues the healthy operation of moral instincts. The situation is full of hope, but it is also ripe with danger. It is certain the present incongruity between vision and duty cannot last. Either we must cast aside the one or take up the other.

We must take up Christ's cross and follow Him. Perhaps, in our moral cowardice, we may try other and numerous devices. We may have to suffer more before in very weariness we fling ourselves at Christ's feet. But one thing is certain. When we have given ourselves wholly to obedience we shall wonder how we allowed hesitation to hold us back, for we shall discover the truth of the Master's word, that to him who gives up all there is granted a hundredfold of satisfaction now, and the enjoyment, here and hereafter, of eternal life.

Christianity and Riches

Mark x. 24.—'And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!'

The Christian use of money is a difficult subject. We cannot read the Bible honestly without becoming conscious that there is in it a tremendous suspicion of riches as such, though the Old Testament and the New Testament are different. There is a great deal of truth in the saying that prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, and adversity of the New. In the Old Testament there is at least one strand which takes prosperity and wealth, national and personal, to be the mark of the Divine blessing. And you have in the Old Testament plenty of good rich men with the blessing of God on them. Abraham, Boaz the landowner, Job at the beginning of his story, and at the end: for the author insists on making him rich again at the end. But there is another strand. In the social law which is contained in the Pentateuch we find the main object of great groups of regulations is to protect the poor from the rapacity of the rich. In the Prophets and the Psalms we have page after page of terrible denunciation of the rich—of the people who desire to enlarge their properties at all cost, to 'add house to house and field to field'; and their greediness, their oppressiveness, their grinding of the faces of the poor, and their luxury are denounced, scathingly and mercilessly.

When we come to the New Testament and ask about the teaching of our Lord, we find this same suspicion of wealth. He had a suspicion of whatever allowed people to feel themselves a privileged class, or conduced to their regarding themselves as exceptional people who counted in God's sight for more than their fellows. So He had a suspicion of the learned class; but it expressed itself more often concerning the rich. They would be the people who would instinctively feel that they were a privileged class, and that others were to work for them; and it is upon that kind of feeling that He pours His tremendous irony. There are no utterances of His more tremendous than the parable of the Rich Fool and the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

In the early days they were quite full of the principle that covetousness—and the Greek word means simply the love of getting, the desire to be rich—is idolatry; it took the place, that is, of the old desire to worship idols. There was substituted for that literal idolatry the worship of mammon—the placing of wealth in that position in the heart where God, His will, His love, and His justice ought to reign alone. Covetousness is idolatry. But now

think of our tradition. This desire to be rich, instead of being in our minds as one of the chiefest of sins, has come to be regarded as one of the most natural and legitimate of all desires. We mildly reprobate luxury when it is vulgar, but condone it gladly when it is refined. Few of us are inclined to re-echo Richard Cobden's words: 'When I go to church there is one prayer which I say with my whole soul, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us."' The Church and the world have agreed together. We have come to resemble not remotely those peoples of Samaria of old, of whom it is written that 'they feared the Lord *and served their own gods*.'

¶ A young lady, sitting next Tennyson one evening at a dinner-party, spoke contemptuously of a certain marriage as a very penniless one. The poet rummaged in his pocket till he managed to extract a penny, which he slapped down loudly on the table at her side, crying, 'There, I give you that. That is the God you worship!'[1]

¶ Professor James of America has said: 'When one sees the way in which wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation, one wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty is a worthy religious vocation may not be the reform which our time stands most in need of. Among us English-speaking peoples especially do the praises of poverty need once more to be sung.'

As Christians what deliberate attitude of mind should we have on this subject of wealth?

1. It should be frankly recognized that to live and to enjoy one's self in idleness on the toil of others is a totally illegitimate position. Of course there are many different kinds of labour. The owner of property who really manages his property is labouring; a man who thinks and studies and writes is labouring quite as truly as any one else and quite as hard; and a woman who manages a household or brings up a family is doing the noblest kind of work. By all means let us broaden our sense of what work means. Nevertheless, 'if any will not work, neither let him eat.' It would be an immense transformation of our society if the children of what we call the upper classes had this truth ingrained into them not by teaching only but by the whole assumption of society. 'As I look back upon my own school days,' says Dr Gore, 'I feel that any such assumption was infinitely remote. We had, most of us, no doubt at all that we were a class for whom other people were to work, and who were to enjoy ourselves to the best of our opportunities. We too might have to work: nevertheless there was no doubt that we were going out into life to get as much enjoyment as we could, and that, as a matter of course, other people were to work for us.' That spirit is not yet dead, and it requires very fundamental eradication. Every boy and girl must be taught that he must justify his existence by labour profitable to society, and any one who fails to do this should be made ashamed of himself.

2. Then, we need to make a great effort to detach ourselves from wealth, and to learn again the old Christian fear of being rich. We must revive the belief that if we have got what is necessary for a healthy life we have got all that we can reasonably claim. There may be more laid upon us. We may have larger responsibilities; we may have riches; but we must cut ourselves free from the desire to be rich. And there would follow, no doubt, from that new attitude towards wealth what our society greatly needs—public instances of the voluntary abandonment of possessions. There are perhaps more instances among us to-day of such abandonment of wealth and property, where it can legitimately be renounced, than people are aware of; but there is no public opinion that welcomes them and rejoices in them. That is what we need; then they would be more abundant and also would produce more spiritual effect. Of course there will remain many people who have the responsibilities of property and wealth, and who cannot renounce them. Nevertheless it would be a great thing if we were detached. Our Lord said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'; that is, those who are detached from money and the desire for money.

¶ John Wesley said a fine thing about money. He said that it never stayed with him. 'I fling it out of my hands as quickly as possible lest it should find a way into my heart.'

¶ Garibaldi, the great Italian patriot, at the beginning of his career had to flee from his

[1] James Moffatt.

country. He went to South America and settled down in Uruguay, and helped them to secure their freedom there. After they had won their freedom they offered him lands and everything if he would only stay with them. But he said, 'No, I must keep myself free for Italy.' He refused everything and went back to Italy to set her free. After he had won Italy her freedom they offered him anything he wanted, but he said, 'All I want is a bag of seed corn for my little farm in Capri,' and he went back to Capri to cultivate his farm. He kept the spirit of detachment.[1]

3. And then we need to think fundamentally about the meaning of justice and about the relation of justice to the rights of property. Justice is a Divine thing; it means a certain equality among men: not equality of faculty or equality of position or status, but a fundamental equality none the less. It means the equal right of every single man and woman to have the opportunity to make the best of himself or herself. It is certain that the great Christian Church was right in its best days in finding here the real principle of justice in the sight of God, before whom certainly every man counts for one and no one counts for more than one. This principle is no enemy to the rights of property in a certain sense. Christianity is not communistic. We cannot conceive a healthy society without private property for use; that indeed seems to be involved in the independence and nobility of the individual life. But an almost unrestricted right of property is a very different thing. The unrestricted right of a man to keep property which is injurious and simply a source of widespread degradation is an intolerable evil. Again, that what is confessedly a dangerous trade, like the trade in intoxicating drinks, should be allowed to pursue its way with so little regard to what is obviously the public interest is a fundamental and disastrous betrayal of the welfare of society. We need to reconstruct our whole conception of the right of private property so as to see that it ought to be restricted and limited by the general interest. No doubt we have improved in this matter of late years, but there is a great deal of room for improvement still. We need to feel again, with a quite fresh vividness, that the value of every single human life ought to be a prior object in the eye of the law as compared with the right of property. Money, in fact, is a trust and a responsibility before God for the general good. Therefore no Christian ought to be able to invest his money in any concern, without a very bad conscience, unless he has done his best to assure himself that that in which he proposes to invest it is for the public good.

[1] James Reid.

¶ Christ's command was, Lay not up *for yourselves* riches upon earth—riches are a curse when selfish purpose is behind them. But there can be a laying-up for others, for the service of humanity. Then the material is no longer the material, it is the spiritual, for its power has been broken by its dedication to spiritual ends. You cannot serve God and Mammon, but you can serve God with mammon. Jesus therefore does not stand for its deification or its denial, but for its dedication. This is workable. He thus becomes the Saviour of the material universe for me.[1]

Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all kinds of stealing, extortion, fraud in trade and contracts; from all making haste to be rich, and from taking advantage of the ignorance or necessity of the persons we deal with.[2]

The Gift and Its Return

Mark x. 29, 30.—'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold.'

HERE our Lord unquestionably gives utterance to a great law of the spiritual life. That law is this—that if we give up our will to the will of God with a true and pure heart, holding nothing back, but in full self-surrender, then everything we give to Him He returns to us in all its fullness, its joy, its power to bless; and with this return, something is added which gives everything else new meaning and value and happiness—the life eternal, which is man's true quest and God's highest gift. In other words, true self-sacrifice means, in the end, true self-realization. God demands our all, not that He may impoverish us, but in order that He may enrich us. He first places at our disposal all the natural blessings of life—the earth and all its riches, experience and all its wealth, the relationships

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 111.
[2] Bishop Ken.

of life, so full of joy and reward, dear souls to love and cherish. Then He demands that we should be prepared to surrender all these to Him, not in word, but in deed, because, unless He holds the supreme place in our heart, all else is lowered and depreciated. And then, finally, when all is surrendered to Him, without any ulterior motive or reserve, He gives back what He has taken away in a higher sense, giving it all a new rich meaning, increasing it a hundredfold in value and preciousness because He gives Himself with it, whom to know and to possess is to have eternal life.

This is a soul's drama in three acts; first there is Life's Gift, then Life's Surrender, then Life's Return. Let us look at those three aspects of the same great reality.

1. *The Gift.*—The natural life is a given life; we inherit it from those who have gone before. We are what we are, and we find ourselves in this great scheme of things, not because we have asked to come into being, but because God has willed that so it shall be. In a sense, life has been forced on us. We did not ask to be born. But there is that in us as a native instinct or endowment which forces us to cling to life as something which is in itself, and in what it brings to us, a good thing. The passion for life is the strongest passion in our nature, overriding every other passion which for the time may conflict with it. And let pessimists say what they like, the vast majority of mankind have found and do find it a good thing to be alive. The world is a beautiful world, in spite of the many ugly things in it; it is a happy world on the whole, in spite of its many sad episodes and its occasional frightful tragedies; and it has true pleasures and noble enjoyments, which are well worth having for their own sakes. We often depreciate the natural life and its experiences, but that is because we are thankless and selfish, miserable in ourselves, and knowing not how to make the best of the Divine gift.

¶ Tertullian calls it an irreligious thing to scorn this wonderful world; not to enjoy the bounty of God, the lavishness of His giving, and to thank Him for it. It was Goodness, Goodness, Goodness that made it all, he cries. Goodness that thought out the roses, and the beauties of the wayside flowers; Goodness that fashioned the shells upon the sea-beach so cunningly; Goodness that painted the feathers of the moor fowl.

2. *The Demand.*—Yet this is the teaching of the text—the Giver of this good thing demands it back from us. At any moment He has a right to ask us to surrender our right to the simple joys and blessings of our natural lives, that He Himself may rule in undisputed supremacy in our hearts, and that we may do some great service for Him.

And for a great reason. We are children of time, and are made to enjoy the blessings of time. But we are also children of eternity, and it is for eternal things that we should really live. Whenever, then, the good things of time stand in the way of the better things of eternity they must give way; we must be willing to set them aside at once without question or demur.

Sometimes it may be that we are called to make a literal surrender of the dearest earthly ties, to leave home and friends, country, and all that they mean, that we may follow the will of Christ. That was the sacrifice that the disciples had made. In other cases men and women have been called on to give up liberty, and all its sweet accompaniments, that they might be able to witness in times of persecution to their faith in Him and their willingness to suffer for Him.

¶ John Bunyan in Bedford Prison, with only a word between him and liberty, yet remained there for years and years rather than utter that word. At any moment he might have gone free from gaol if only he had given his promise not to preach. But he would not, for he could not. It was a terrible trial to a man of his temperament, and the thing that made it most difficult of all was not even the love of liberty. He had a little blind girl, of whom he was passionately fond, who needed special care and nourishment; and though he was able to earn something in prison for wife and children by cobbling shoes, the thought of this little blind girl and his inability to help her to what she needed, weighed with an almost intolerable anguish on his heart. Yet he would not say that word which would seal his mouth when he got out, for preach he must of the love of God and the Cross of Christ, and so for those long years he chose to suffer exile with the people of God rather than sign away his right to speak of the Saviour, and to urge men to receive Him to their hearts.

We may not be called on to give up husband and wife, children and possessions, for the sake of Jesus Christ, but the call comes to us in another way. We are called to set the things of the spirit above the things of the senses. We are called to surrender interest for duty. We are called sometimes to remain poor rather than become rich in shady ways. We are called on to give up our ease, our leisure, our pleasure, that we may save our fellow-men and bring the influences of the gospel to bear upon them. We are called to be such men and women in regard to all our natural life and its relationships that, if the old days of persecution were again to break out, and we were called to give up everything for His sake, we should do so at once and without hesitation. For the true law of life is that Jesus Christ, who stands for all that is holy and Divine, is King and Lord, and when His rights, His crown rights, are in danger, then everything must go that we may defend them.

And this sacrifice is not to be rendered sadly and reluctantly, but joyously, and with a sense of happy compulsion. Recall the parables of the Treasure and the Pearl. When the finders discovered these, what did they do? They went and sold all that they had that they might buy them. And in what spirit? 'Who for joy thereof'—the discovery of the treasure of the pearl—'went and sold all that they had!' This was no unwilling sacrifice, for these men were thinking not of what they were selling, but of what they were going to buy; not of what they were giving up, but of what they were going to gain.

Christ asks for no unwilling sacrifice. We are to give Him our all with gladness. Not till we can take what we love best and lay it gladly at His feet are we worthy of Him who gave up heaven for us, emptying Himself of His glory, and becoming 'poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be made rich.' It is the half-hearted people who are the miserable ones. It is those who love their life too well to surrender it to God who lose Heaven. And the reason why with so many of us religion is a grey, mean thing is because we live a divided life, keeping back a 'part of the price,' like Ananias and Sapphira, and so missing the very thing we seek.

3. *The Return.*—But if we are ready to make this full surrender, what will happen then? Something which is a true miracle, at least from the worldly point of view. All we have surrendered comes back to us multiplied in value. Great tides of life will return to us in flood and power. It is as though something infinitely deep and high suddenly broke in on us, and we find ourselves on a new earth and under a new heaven. It is a small thing to say that religion enables us to enjoy life best. What it does is to give new meaning to all our natural sources of happiness, and invest them all with a new quality and sweetness. If we try to get the best out of life without God, then there is no best in life to get; but, as Jesus once put it, if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us. For Jesus does not call us to follow Him in order to impoverish us, but in order to enrich us; not to take away life's best things, but with life to give the best things.

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand, and come.[1]

¶ God called for my life and I offered it at His footstool; but He gave it me as a Prey, with unspeakable addition. He called for my will, and I resigned it at His call, but He returned me His own in token of His love. He called for the world and I laid it at His feet, with the crowns thereof; I withheld them not at the beckoning of His hand. But mark the benefit of Exchange! For He gave me, instead of Earth, a Kingdom of Eternal Peace, and in lieu of the Crown of Vanity a Crown of Glory. . . . He gave me Joy which no tongue can express and Peace which passeth understanding. My heart was melted with the Height of Comfort; my Soul was immersed in the Depth of Love; my eyes overflowed with tears of greatest pleasure. . . . I begged Himself and He gave me All.[2]

¶ Years ago an English judge in India became interested in the native Christians. By-and-by he heard that a certain rich native, the owner of an indigo farm, had confessed Christ, and was cast out of his home and deprived of all his

[1] Francis Thompson.
[2] *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story*, 20.

possessions. 'Let him come to me,' said the judge, 'and if he is a true Christian man he will not mind working. He shall be attendant-bearer of my little son.' So Norbudur came and humbly took his place as a servant in the household. Every evening after dinner the judge had the whole household assembled for prayers, and he would read to them in their own language from the New Testament. One evening he came to the verse: 'Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold.' The judge paused and said: 'Now, none of us have left houses and lands and wife and children for Christ's sake—except one, Norbudur,' and he looked at the bearer. 'Will you tell us—Is it true what this verse says?' Quietly Norbudur rose, took up the Mahratti Testament, and read the verse through. Then he raised his head and spoke: 'He says He gives a hundredfold. I know He gives a thousandfold.' [1]

The Sorrowful Way

Mark x. 32.—'And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.'

St Mark gives us a far more vivid picture of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem than the other Evangelists. He brings the whole scene sharply before us, and imparts to his narrative something of the dramatic intensity of the moment when the fateful decision was made. We can see it all—the little company of pilgrims taking their way towards the capital; the Master walking alone some distance in front; the same feeling of uneasiness and awe exhibited on every countenance as they gaze at Him, turning presently into actual fear. 'And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.' The early tradition that in St Mark's Gospel we have the reminiscences of the Apostle Peter is well founded. Here, surely, is the testimony of an eye-witness, a closely interested person who could never forget the experience. It is just like Peter, too, a man of strong emotions and keen memory for human details rather than connected discourses—a born realist, if ever there was one. In this terse, telling sentence, then, we have a mental photograph clear and distinct of what occurred at a turning-point in human history. But why should that Christ striding ahead make them amazed and afraid? It is the only record we have of any incident or occasion when these disciples, who loved Him, were filled with nameless dread. There must have been something in Jesus to account for it—some sign of agony, some mark of uncontrollable emotion, some drawn look—that startled these loving hearts.

The Master Himself supplied the explanation of His own emotion, whether the disciples were able to link cause and effect together or not. Having relaxed from His overmastering feelings, He turned back to His astonished disciples, and said quietly: 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests.' He had made the great decision to go to Jerusalem, knowing what it meant. Without any doubt, as we gather from His own words, He knew exactly what this journey portended. He knew that He was putting Himself into the remorseless hands of His enemies. But, having made His choice and pledged His loyalty to God, nothing thereafter could ever daunt Him.

¶ One day Pizarro, the great Peruvian explorer, found himself in direst straits. His men were dreading to challenge any further the perils of the unknown, which were bad enough in reality, and which loomed even more terrible when seen through the magnifying lenses of terror wedded to imagination. At last Pizarro forced things to a clear-cut issue. He drew his sword, and with the point he traced upon the sand a line that ran due east and west. Then he spoke: 'Friends and comrades! on that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion, and death; on this side, ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its riches; here, Panama, and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. *For my part, I go to the South!*' [1]

Jesus strode on alone; the misty air
Mounted between us till we all did stare
At what could scarce be He, or if it were,
Then He was changed. Amazed, we stumbled on
With chattering teeth. Madmen, we should have known,
We should have known! An hour, two hours were gone;

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, Nov. 10, 1927.

[1] D. M. Joss, *Springs of Water*, 66.

Still on we stumbled, gazing each on each,
And each on Him. 'Ware of our stricken speech,
At last He turned, tarried till we should reach
His side; then thrust us toward a grove of oak,
And when we all were gathered round He spoke,
In calm and mighty accents:
'Lo
Toward Jerusalem we go,
There the Son of man will be
Handed over secretly,
Sentenced by the priests and scribes,
Doomed, disowned; then Roman gibes,
Mocking, scourging, spitting, death;
Nay, but not for long!' He saith.
And there we stood and stared, and scraped the ground,
And not one word of hope or comfort found
Its single way to Him. The only sound
We heard, when He had ceased, the dying bleat
Of a young lamb, the scud of wolfish feet,
Then the thin whisper of the falling sleet.
We should have known! Blind fools, we should have known!
Instead, we dreamed still of an earthly throne,
And Jesus there, and all the emperors gone.[1]

Instead of going quietly into the city, Jesus made a sort of triumphal entry, allowing the populace publicly to acclaim Him as the Messiah, a thing He had never done before. The challenge to the rulers was unmistakable. 'Hosanna to the Son of David:' shouted the people; 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' When some of the Pharisees asked Him to put a stop to it, His only reply was, 'If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.' To make things worse, Jesus drove the money-changers out of the Temple, thus openly condemning the practices of the priests, and then kept possession of it Himself and taught there for two whole days. Clearly something had to be done, and it was done. Jesus was secretly arrested in order that His followers should not be able to make any disturbance on His behalf, and the rest was a foregone conclusion.

Into the innermost heart of the mystery of the Passion of Christ we shall never penetrate in this world, but we can reverently and humbly associate ourselves therewith; and there are three things we might observe in reference to this initial stage of it so vividly presented by Mark.

1. *The Necessity of the Cross.*—We have here the Saviour's disclosure of the discovery He had already made Himself of the necessity of the Cross. It lies at the heart of things; and is an experience which the soul must undergo in order to attain to power. Life has two sides; on the one beauty, grandeur, happiness, and on the other sorrow and tragedy. To-day it is a summer garden bathed in sunshine, full of fragrance and glorious beauty. Press aside the roses, peer underneath the lilies and violets, and behold the grinning mask of death. There is tragedy under every leaf; the cruel fang of the beast of prey lurks behind the fairest prospect in which the senses take delight. Sometimes this realization comes upon the human heart with a shock of dreadful surprise. Can fate really mean this evil for us? We have heard of it coming to our neighbours; we have read of it in the Press as falling upon people whom we do not know and cannot visualize as being real people with feelings like ours. But that it should come to us!—how incredible, and yet true! The doctor has just pronounced sentence of death. Perhaps the blow has not fallen on ourselves yet; we may have a little longer amid the life and laughter. The summons has come to our heart's best beloved; the sudden chill of the news has pierced to the depths of our soul; and we know that for us life will never be the same again.

What has the Passion of Jesus to teach us about this? It is not only of the fact of death we are thinking, but of the fact of sorrow, the destruction of earthly joy, the menace that haunts every scene of human happiness. Like ourselves, our Divine Master hoped to be spared the things He dreaded most. It is clear, moreover, that He did not understand the full reason why He could not be spared the Cross. But what did He do? 'He set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem'—to the hosannas and the palm-strewn pathway, and afterwards the cruel mocking and the crown of thorns. He knew they would both be there. But He had to do His Father's will, mysterious and awful though it were; He could not and would not prove faithless to what He had felt and known of the Father's love; so with resolute determination He went straight through till death was

[1] Edith Anne Stewart, in *The British Weekly*, Aug. 12, 1926.

swallowed up in victory. And we have His own testimony, given afterwards to His two mourning disciples on the road to Emmaus, that it was right and fitting that the obligation should have been laid upon Him so to do. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?'

¶ In June 1892 Romanes received the first warnings of serious illness. A blind spot had appeared in one of his eyes, and from the first the doctors took a serious view of his case. Life and sight were alike threatened and instant rest and quiet were ordered. It was then that a letter came from Canon Scott Holland which touched him greatly. Mr Holland wrote: 'It is a tremendous moment when first one is called upon to join the great army of those who suffer. That vast world of love and pain opens suddenly to admit us one by one within its fortress. We are afraid to enter into the land, yet you will, I know, feel how high is the call. It is as a trumpet speaking to us, that cries aloud—"It is your turn—endure." Play your part. As they endured before you, so now, close up the ranks—be patient and strong as they were. Since Christ, this world of pain is no accident untoward or sinister, but a lawful department of life, with experiences, interests, adventures, hopes, delights, secrets of its own. These are all thrown open to us as we pass within the gates—things that we could never learn or know or see, so long as we were well.

'God help you to walk through this world now opened to you as through a kingdom, regal, royal, and wide and glorious.'[1]

2. *The Cross endured not for Himself.*—Let us ever remember that the greatest fact about the Passion of our blessed Lord was that it was not endured for Himself at all. Had it been for Himself He could never have gone through it. The secret of that awe-inspiring demeanour of His on the way to Jerusalem was that what He was about to do was for God, for righteousness, for eternal justice and truth; He was giving Himself as a free offering to the totality of life, an act of reparation to the sin-disordered spiritual universe, and perhaps something even more than this. And so we too have to rise above all the merely personal in what we suffer if we are to effect thereby anything worthy of our sonship to God, our fellowship with the risen Lord. So long as we think only, of anything grievous we are called to endure, 'This hurts *me*,' or 'Why should *I* have this to bear?' so long do we fail to see the sacredness at the heart of the mystery of all pain. It is not even enough to submit to God's will in this way in the belief that thus one gains blessing to one's own soul. No doubt that is true, but if this were the only truth about it we should fall far short of what stands revealed in the Cross of Christ. We do not want to believe that what the noblest saints of God have suffered has been for their own good and nothing else; we do not want to have this wretched little ego of ours polished and perfected by God's disciplines here on earth in order that it may be fitted for an eternity of bliss. We all want something greater than that to live for. And the only thing that satisfies is that our suffering is borne for Christ, and, in a manner of speaking, is included in His Passion. As a matter of simple fact, love to Christ has done more than any other force in the world to make men and women forget themselves in an overwhelming desire to bless mankind and glorify God.

3. *Fear of the Future Dispelled.*—Let us dismiss all fear from our thoughts about the future. The fear of the disciples arose partly from their feeling that they were in the presence of something terrible which they could not understand. They knew that some danger threatened their Lord, but what it was they did not comprehend; He was alone in that dread hour. They were partly afraid of Him, too; His spirit was moving on a plane so far above theirs that they could not soar to such a height; they could only follow Him in the way and wait a fuller revealing. And it came; these same men in after days gladly suffered and died for Jesus as He had suffered and died for them. The future held nothing in store for them that could make them tremble; they were utterly and entirely His. When we travel the sorrowful way let us hear the Master's voice coming out of the darkness, 'Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.'

¶ Mr Spender tells us that during the War a party of journalists visited Verdun. They were met outside the town by a French officer who made them an elegant little speech of welcome in the Gallic manner. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the French Republic considers that the highest

[1] *The Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, 284.

honour it can pay its guests is to take them into Verdun. But, gentlemen, I should add, that the French Republic cannot guarantee to take them out.' But Christ does guarantee to bring us through whatever may lie before us.

It was the Sea of Sorrow; and I stood
At midnight on the shore. The heavy skies
Hung dark above; the voice of them that wept
Was heard upon the waters, and the chill,
Sad going of a midnight wind, which stirred
No wave thereon. And I was there alone
To face that dreadful sea: I felt the cold
And deathly waters touch my feet, and drew
A little back, and shuddered. Yet I knew
That all who follow Christ must suffer here.
'Master,' I said, with trembling, in the night,
With voice that none but *He* would note or know,
So hoarse and weak—'O Master, bid me come!
If on these woeful waters I must walk,
Then let me hear thy voice thereon, that so
I may not die, before I reach thy feet,
Of loneliness and fear.'
I listened there,
With breathless longing by that solemn sea,
Till through the curtains of the night I heard
His own voice calling me—that voice which draws
His children through the flood and through the fire
To kiss His feet; and at the Master's word
I left the shore, forth walking on the dim
And untried waters, there to follow Him
Who called me, and there to see His face.

Afraid yet Following

Mark x. 32.—'And as they followed, they were afraid.'

It is not difficult for us to understand the fear of those who followed. It was fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of the untried. It would have been so much easier and pleasanter for them all if they had not taken that hard Jerusalem road. Why leave the silver shores of Galilee, full of association, crowded with memories, rich in blessing? Why take the road of risk and the highway of fear?

1. To those who followed that day there was only one answer to that question:

It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still?

The way of progress, the road of redemption, ever calls for the endurance of some misgiving on the part of those who follow. If we are not to spend all our days in the insufficient shallows and low mud-flats, we must take the tide at the flood. But none has ever taken it without a mixture of misgiving to temper his exultation. We are all explorers of our destiny, soldiers of fortune, ready, at least in the clean abandon of youth, to follow the Gleam: yet none has ever followed altogether without fear.

My purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.[1]

All the fulfilment of life depends upon our being ready to follow, even with the convoy of fear. But most assuredly Christ goes before everyone who is putting life to the touch in the great adventure, thinking more of the prize than of a base prudence.

2. But the people who followed Jesus that day knew that they were not only leaving youth and Galilee days behind them. He was leading them on to a new and untried state of existence. The whole social stability seemed to be imperilled. And this nameless kind of fear of things oppresses consciously or unconsciously the spirits of every one of us. We know that the events of the past few years have effected a radical change in the whole social, political, and international outlook. It is particularly hard for the older among us to adjust themselves to altered conditions and changed standards of life. It would be unnatural if a certain misgiving did not at times cloud our spirits. Yet we must beware of ever letting our natural foreboding give the impression that we fear that God has abandoned the rudder of the universe. We must believe that it is not for nothing that we are leaving Galilee behind, every step we take. Indeed, part of the weakness of the Church to-day in the world is due to the fact that she has got the reputation of having consistently opposed much social advance. It is not true, but there has been much which has tended to give some colour to the

[1] Tennyson, *Ulysses*.

charge. The moral progress of humanity has been a fight not with conscious wickedness, but with outworn customs, illusions, stupidity, wrong-headedness, blindness. How senseless, how perverse, seem to-day so many of the things that were once accepted without question by the wisest and the best! The divine right of Kings, the infallibility of priests, slavery, the stake for witches, the gallows for petty theft, to mention one or two of the thousand oppressions, stupidities, cruelties, that have held the world in thrall. Doubtless many of the things we would die for to-day are equally delusions. The comfort is that they will not be able to withstand the single eye, the pure heart. Thought and reason, truth and goodness—to them is the victory, though the war is never-ending. We are all in the way going up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall us there: but the royal Master goes before, and the chief fear in our hearts should be lest we do not follow with all the eagerness and confidence with which we should.

3. But perhaps the fear which weighs most heavily of all with some of those who are following is that which is due to the religious changes which are sure to come. In Galilee the healed and happy people had waited on Jesus, eager to make Him king. Why leave all that behind? It was precisely in that moment of their foreboding that Jesus took the Twelve, and, so far from dispelling, more than justified their gravest fears. 'He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.' The disciples were so appalled by what they heard that they seem to have missed the last and most important word of all. They were so stunned by the horror and the shame that they did not have ears for the promise of the glory that should follow.

There are many who are perturbed by the trend of present thought, and who wonder where it is all going to land us. And yet if we keep following that silent Figure who ever goes ahead, moving on through endless change to ends which we but dimly comprehend, all must be well. The only danger is lest the fear should ever make us cease to follow. Those who followed faithfully in spite of their fears came back again to Galilee and all its old raptures and simplicities, came back with a new understanding of their Lord, came back to a Galilee redeemed and transformed.

And that is the result of all change. We may not like it; we may fail to comprehend it; we may openly and frankly fear it. And yet we must never imagine that safety lies in holding back. They are objects of an infinite pity who keep a pathetic watch over religious forms and theological phrases which have lost their meaning for most people to-day, and are consequently dead—keeping watch over them as Rizpah watched over her dead, to scare away the vulture and jackal that would devour all that was left to her of motherhood. Faith does not mean that we cease from asking questions; it means that we ask and keep on asking until some satisfying answer comes.

¶ Not to inquire was possible for our forefathers, but it is not possible for us. With our intellectual growth has come an inexpressible anxiety to possess the highest truth attainable by us. This desire is not sinful, not presumptuous, but really one of the best and purest of our instincts, being nothing else than the sterling honesty of the intellect, seeking the harmony of concordant truth, and utterly disinterested.[1]

The Christ who goes before us in the way calls us to a courage which bids us give up that spiritual sluggishness and mental sloth which guard the pet infallibilities in which we could for ever take our ease and cease to think, in perfect peace. We are afraid—of course we are afraid. 'If these things are not true,' we say, 'where am I? How can I be sure of anything? If the Bible is not literally true, word for word, if the picture of God on which the fathers fed their faith is not accurate, where am I? What is there settled?' The answer is that we are not meant to be settled, but to keep following. 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know.' We fear as we leave old familiar ground. But the answer to all our questions, the ground of all our assurance, the Saviour of the soul, the real Christ, is out there on the hard

[1] P. G. Hamerton.

high road, moving steadily on; and if we are to know the truth we must at least try to keep up.

¶ 'God offers to every mind its choice between Truth and Repose,' says Emerson. 'Take which you please. You can never have both.'

Our need to-day is for men like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who can show us how to face a time of change and a period of transition; who can show us how 'He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.' What we need is a closer walk with Him who ever draws nigh to those who are sad only because they love Him, not because any of their cherished theories have been demolished; and to such He opens the Scriptures until their hearts burn, showing them that it behoved Christ to endure these things and to enter into His glory.

Onward, then, and fear not,
Children of the day,
For His word shall never,
Never pass away.

The Cup of Jesus

Mark x. 39.—'Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.'

It was to James and John that Jesus spoke these words. In their ignorance they had asked that they might share the Master's glory. In His veiled way the Master told them that they who would reign with Him must first drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism. Sobered perhaps, but undismayed, they said, 'We are able'; and Jesus, who knew better than they what their words meant, acknowledged that they were able.

At the Last Supper a little more light was given. 'He took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them; and they all drank of it.' The Cup was His blood of the covenant, shed for many. A little later, in Gethsemane, the two disciples were to learn yet more about His Cup; or rather the three disciples; for now Peter was with them, and Peter too had said, 'I am able': 'If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee.'

1. What was the Cup of Jesus? We have learned afresh how deep in Old Testament Scripture were the roots of Jesus' piety and Jesus' thought of God. What does 'the cup' mean in the Old Testament. At least three times out of four it means the cup of the wrath of God. 'The wrath of God' is a phrase with which Paul has made us familiar; but these anthropomorphisms have their danger. God's wrath is not the righteous indignation of an offended monarch. The God of whom we speak is He 'of whom, and through whom, and unto whom are all things.' The world is God's world; to sin is to go against the constitution of things. God's wrath is the reaction of the world against our way of life, the reaction most of all of that which is Divine in ourselves.

¶ There is an apt illustration of this reaction in the story of Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. '"Hester," he asks, "hast thou found peace?" She smiled drearily, looking down upon her bosom. "Hast thou?" she asked. "None! nothing but despair!" he answered. "What else could I look for, being what I am, and leading such a life as mine? Were I an atheist—a man devoid of conscience—a wretch with coarse and brutal instincts—I might have found peace long ere now. Nay, I never should have lost it! But, as matters stand with my soul, whatever of good capacity there originally was in me, all of God's gifts that were the choicest have become the ministers of spiritual torment. Hester, I am most miserable!"'

But a man need not drink this cup alone. It is a commonplace that our sins involve in suffering innocent people whom we do not even know. The Old Testament rises to the strange thought that our sins have consequences even for God. 'Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.' As Professor J. E. M'Fadyen has put it, instead of Israel serving God, 'she had, by reason of her sins, made Him serve her, her guilt imposing upon Him the burden of punishing her by exile, and the task of restoring her again.' God Himself drinks the cup of wrath with guilty men. And forgiveness is wrought out for us by One who is Himself oppressed and broken by what He forgives. 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake.'

2. Whatever the Cup of Jesus was, it was certainly not fear of physical death. He did not shrink from the nails of the Cross. He refused the stupefying potion offered Him when He hung there. As Browning expressed it in

Prospice, He would not let Death bandage His eyes and bid Him creep past the post of the foe. A recent writer spoke of Jesus being 'trapped in Jerusalem.' Surely the whole story testifies that in one respect Jesus did not go as a lamb to the slaughter. He went deliberately, knowing what awaited Him. His Father had given Him the Cup to drink and He would drink it.

Even we, with our sensibilities blunted, as those of Jesus were not, by familiarity with life's lower levels, can see enough even in the immediate circumstances to account for His horror of the Cup. He may have cherished, almost till the last, the hope that the Temple would become once more God's house of prayer. Now He knew that the day was coming when stone would be torn from stone, knew that that was its fate because the guardians of the Temple had yielded to the temptation which He had resisted so strenuously; they put the Jewish kingdom before God's Kingdom.

The story of Jesus' relations with Judas is passed over almost in silence by the gospel tradition; we can guess that Judas' treachery played a large part in the filling up of the Cup. That the crowd should turn against Him was perhaps no great marvel to One who knew human nature in its surface moods as well as in the depths of its possibilities. The point at which we feel we have reached a region where our scales and measuring-rods cannot help us is when we try to fathom what it meant to the pure spirit of Jesus, no longer merely to foresee, but to realize with all the bitterness of actual experience, that when God's Son enters the world and does the works of God, the world's answer is the thong and the jeer, the crown of thorns and the Cross.

In the Cup that Jesus drank during those last hours there was one element peculiarly perplexing and distressing, an experience that has dismayed others who have tried to live their lives in the spirit in which He lived His. When Moses first began to work for the redemption of his people, the disheartening thing was not so much that his efforts failed, but that his very attempt to alleviate their lot resulted only in increasing their burdens. Besides doing their day's 'darg' of bricks as before, they now had to find their own materials as well.

¶ The chief sorrow of David Livingstone's last years in Africa was his experience of the overwhelming and circumventing power of evil. He found that, instead of missionaries labouring in his track, those who tried to do so broke down and died, while the slave-dealers, whom he had hoped so utterly to defeat, profited by his discoveries and utilized the very roads into the interior which he had opened up for the purpose of redeeming the whole country from bondage of every kind. Thus the evil the pioneer went out to overthrow was increased at first in its extent and character by his efforts, and he was forced to recognize its triumph as coming through himself.[1]

If the work of Jesus produced a Peter, a John, a Magdalene, it provided a stage also for a Herod, a Pilate, a Caiaphas. 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.' But for Jesus, Judas might have lived a respectable life and died a commonplace death. Is there not something of this feeling in the curious explanation of the parable method that Mark puts into the mouth of Jesus? 'For the outsiders everything is put in parabolic form, so that they may see without perceiving, and hear without understanding, in case they turn and find forgiveness.' Verily the waters of a full cup were wrung out to Him.

Thus did Jesus at the end of His ministry stand on one side with sinful men over against the holy God, even as at the beginning of His ministry He joined the multitudes that went to the baptism of John for the remission of sins. Hence the cry from the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Did Jesus Himself realize at that moment that in His dereliction, when He felt that God was hiding His face, He was Himself the supreme revelation of God who bears our sins on His heart? The writer to the Hebrews found a kind of foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus in the slaughter of helpless animals. Its true Old Testament analogue is in the cry of sacrificial father-love, 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' The Cup of Jesus has now become

> the Holy Cup
> With all its wreathen steps of passion-flowers
> And quivering sparkles of the ruby stars.

[1] A. D. Martin, *Aspects of the Way*, 122.

True Greatness

Mark x. 43, 44.—'But whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.' (R.V.)

By the advent of Christianity into the world a new ideal of greatness was introduced, a new standard of human conduct established. According to the popular ideal of the old world the greatest man was he who could command the services of others and be commanded of none. Subjection was degrading, work irksome, and pleasure difficult of attainment. Hence the greatest and most to be envied of men was he who was subject to none, waited upon by all, and able to compass and enjoy every known pleasure. To rule, not to serve, to be ministered unto, not to minister, was the ideal of the ancient world. And it cannot be doubted that with many in the modern world the old ideal still bears sway.

It was this self-seeking spirit, though in a higher mood, that moved the heart of the disciples of our Lord. They knew that their Master was come to establish a kingdom, and their minds often dwelt on the higher offices they were to fill in the Messiah's Kingdom. These ambitions which they nursed in their hearts burst out from time to time in the strifes and jealousies that rent the peace of the Twelve. These disputes had broken out on the way to Capernaum from the Mount of Transfiguration: they were revived even after the Last Supper, and when the thoughts of the Lord were fixed in steadfast sorrow on the dark tragedy of the coming day His disciples were engaged in hot debate as to the places of distinction they should severally hold in His Kingdom. This selfish spirit our Lord firmly rebukes: My Kingdom is not of this world: the spirit of My servants is not a self-seeking one: the greatest among My followers is not he who can command the services of all the others, but he who renders the widest services to those that need them. The disciple shall be as his Master, and your Master has come not to be ministered unto but to minister: he, therefore, that would be greatest among you shall be servant of all.

¶ Louis XIV., in his spirit of tyranny, could say, 'I am the state.' This was the pagan view. Frederick the Great, of Prussia, gave fine expression to the Christian view in that noble utterance, 'It is the business of the king to be the chief of the servants of the state!' [1]

¶ When the Archbishop of York preached at the Coronation of King Edward, he chose as his text the words, 'I am among you as he that serveth.' It is the supreme dignity of the king to be of service to his people. On the crest of the Prince of Wales are inscribed the words, '*I serve.*' When the Prime Minister calls together the members of the Imperial Cabinet, the official summons reads that 'the servants of the King are commanded to meet.' [2]

1. According to the popular canon of greatness, great men are the men of strong individualities, high powers, lofty genius, vast resources, no matter how selfishly they use such endowments. And, as the greatness thus conceived does not involve the moral use of such powers, the world condones the sins and frailties of its great ones and exempts them from the canons of conduct which regulate the actions of ordinary men.

Now at the outset Christianity denounces the idea that great capacities or genius in themselves constitute true greatness, and teaches that only he is great who consciously contributes to the real progress of the race, and who, renouncing selfish aims, works in harmony with the Divine laws that are slowly shaping human life and working towards the universal good. It is only the labours of such that are built on the rock of reality, and that in some form must last for ever. If great powers and capacities in themselves made their possessors great, some of the worst and most destructive of the human race could rightly lay claim to this greatness. But there have been great thinkers, great artists, great generals, great scientists, powerful emperors and war-lords who have by no means been great men, and whose lives have in many respects been a curse to the race to whom they should have proved a blessing, and whose influence, with its evil attractiveness, has swept over the world as a spiritual pestilence.

¶ Froude, in his *Life of Beaconsfield* confesses that, in the truest sense, Beaconsfield could not be considered great. He had always some personal or party end in view. And true greatness, Froude maintains, consists in the conse-

[1] L. A. Banks.
[2] F. W. Boreham, *The Nest of Spears*, 247.

cration of great powers, *from pure motives*, to great purposes.[1]

True greatness, then, depends not on greatness of faculty, but on the spirit in which the faculty is used; not on great powers, but on the faithfulness of the service rendered with whatever powers a man is endowed; and from this service none is excluded. The terms of this law are that every endowment is also a requisition of service, and the higher the gifts the wider the sphere of service required. So in the kingdom of Christian greatness there is a place for every capacity, from the man of one talent to the man of ten.

¶ A talent is like any other coin: it has two sides. On one side is written 'endowment,' and on the other 'responsibility.'

¶ An impressive incident is told about the death of David Livingstone. When he was buried in Westminster Abbey many eyes were fixed on the Negro who stood at the head of the casket. This was the Zanzibar servant who had brought his master's body from the African swamp, asking as his only recompense that he might attend it on its sad journey across the sea. In the matter of talents two men could hardly have lived in greater contrast. Livingstone was passing rich in talents—in medical skill, in charm of nature, in vision of a friendly world washed white. The negro slave had but one talent—his mind dense, his colour a curse (since white people will hate a man for the colour of his skin), his only gift to look up and follow like a faithful dog. But the two—how unequal in grace!—were one in courage of faithfulness, and therefore brothers in the approval of their common Lord.[2]

2. A man does not need singular or extraordinary gifts to qualify him for greatness, but he can frame for himself a high conception of duty in the sphere allotted to him, can shape his life thereby, and so fulfil the plan designed for him of God. For God has a plan for every man's life, and his life's service is reckoned on in the universal whole. Accordingly, when a man accepts his life's duty as from God, his life becomes a partial revelation of God's thought, of the Eternal Order; it becomes an unfolding of the Divine plans, and every fresh turn in the experience of such a life is a further discovery of God, and all the various changes and chances of life but further disclosures of the Father's will as touching His child.

Even when we acknowledge that we have a Divine plan to carry out, how often we mar its execution by complaining of our lot—our birth, education, employment, infirmities, burthens, losses, wrongs. But let us remember that these, however they may have originated—whether directly from God, from ourselves, or others—are now at all events our lot, and to be accepted as such from our Father's hand; that even these limitations and hindrances are, if we meet them in the right spirit, the exact discipline we require, and form the very opportunities our faith needs, in order to mould our lives after the pattern there is of each in the mind of God. And, however circumscribed or obscure our lot may be, let it not be forgotten that in the life of a child of the Eternal no duties can be mean or trifling, unless we make them so by the spirit in which we discharge them.

And, further, we must feel that God has commissioned us and sent us forth to this spiritual task, which no one else can do, or at all events cannot do as well as we. Such belief is in great measure the secret of the success of the world's reformers: it is a belief, too, which, if cherished with singleness of heart and devotion of spirit, will endow us with a double portion of energy and enthusiasm in our life of service; and no service we render will be wanting in Christ-like character when it issues from the loyally fulfilled conviction—'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.'

3. But let us see how men act with regard to this Christian law of service. Clearly, there are vast multitudes who ignore the Law of Christ, and, instead of seeking to serve, avowedly labour only to secure the services of others; and, seeing that these can be procured through wealth or power, they make haste to be rich. The goal desired is what is termed an independence—a position in which they look only to be ministered unto, not to minister. So far as this merely selfish ambition is realized, it proves itself destructive of spiritual freedom, and becomes in reality an abandonment of the rightful obedience we owe both to God and to man, in order to subject the whole life to the despotism of self. Thus we evade the Divine necessities of service with which God girds us on every side; we fall into spiritual bondage;

[1] F. W. Boreham. [2] G. A. Buttrick.

whereas, if we cheerfully accept and fulfil them, we are liberated from all authority less than the God who ordains them, and become no longer His servants but His sons, as we fulfil them from our hearts.

It is true, of course, that in some way or other we cannot help serving others. Society is so bound together with mutual ties and services that a man cannot live a social life without making some return to society for all the service society renders to him. Thus the most confirmed self-seeker cannot help doing some good to his neighbour, yet because he does it blindly or selfishly, he does not reap the spiritual benefit that would naturally result to himself. In everyday life we must give at all events the material value for what we get. But if we do this of necessity we not only sever ourselves from the spiritual discipline of social life, but we also strip it, so far as we can, of all spiritual significance for our neighbour.

Unless we have given ourselves to the service of our fellow men there is no real life here; there is no real life beyond the stars; we have no part among the heroic, the saintly, and the wise on earth; no share in the ministrations of the blessed in the world to come.

¶ When Elihu Root was called into the Roosevelt cabinet as Secretary of State, an intimate friend wrote him: 'Why not wait three years and get the substance instead of being the shadow now?'

Mr Root wrote back: 'I have always thought that the opportunity to do something worth while is the substance, and trying to get something was the shadow.'[1]

The Way of Christ

Mark x. 43-45.—'Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

1. When Nietzsche uttered his blasphemous and bitter invectives against the teaching of Jesus Christ, when he exclaimed: 'I call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous, innermost perversion, the one immortal blemish of mankind,' we may be shocked at the violence of his hatred and contempt for ideals and precepts which he regarded as fit only for weaklings and for cowards and for slaves; but at least we can regard him as honest and sincere.

What can be said of a state, a social order, or individual men and women, claiming to be Christian, and taking as their banner the banner of the Cross, and at the same time in all practical affairs deriding Christ and His teachings, admiring what He bids us shun, and despising what He bids us love? It is this which presents to men and angels the sorry tragedy of our failure and our shame.

It is possible for us, like Nietzsche and many others allied with him in thought, to conceive of the Christian religion as a profound mistake, a wrong turning in the march of life, a blind alley leading to decadence and defeat, the loss of those types most virile and most distinguished in humanity, the survival of types weakest and most unfit. But at least it is utterly impossible to be in doubt as to what it is for which the Christian revelation stands, and the God to whom Christians are committed, and whom they are pledged to follow as the Captain of their souls. For in the Christian revelation the splendour of God is His humility, and the unwearying and self-emptying service which He bestows on every creature He has made. The 'superman' may sit disdainful in his self-conscious power, master of men and things, and bid the common people wash his feet. But God thinks it no shame to wash His creatures' feet. Always and everywhere throughout all time and space He waits upon His creatures with the towel and the basin in His hands, serving them with a loving care. Satan is arrogant and proud, and pride and self-assertion make the atmosphere of Hell. God is humble, and Heaven is Heaven because the spirit of humility and service reigns there supreme.

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet
where live the poorest and lowliest and lost.
When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot
reach down to the depth where thy feet rest
among the poorest and lowliest and lost.
Pride can never approach to where thou walkest
in the clothes of the humble among the
poorest and lowliest and lost.
My heart can never find its way to where thou
keepest company with the companionless
among the poorest, the lowliest, and the
lost.[1]

[1] Rabindranath Tagore.

[1] C. R. Havinghurst.

2. As Christians we are irretrievably committed to that estimate of the character of God, for the dogma of the Incarnation is the very basis of our Faith. And the dogma of the Incarnation commits us to the belief that once in time and space it really happened that He who fills all things, and who transcends all things, and in whom all things consist, revealed Himself in human character and human life; that Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. Men may dispute on this point and on that in the region of our holy Faith; but nobody ever argues about the character of Jesus Christ—this character which reflects the character of God as a still pool reflects the sky. We see Him in the Gospels, this Son of man, so simple that the smallest child can understand and love Him; so great that while His feet are on the earth His head is above the stars, and all the love of this poor world of ours is only a little broken echo of the beating of His heart. We see Him stretching His arms wide to the whole human race, shutting out of His love, His fellowship, His understanding sympathy, nothing that breathes the breath of life or wears the form of man. We see Him always the strong, kind elder brother of the weakest woman, the most sinful man, the smallest child; always at home with all men, always accessible, always the servant of all; never conscious of any barrier built by education, class or birth, never treating even social outcasts with contempt. This is the revelation of the character of God. And it is correspondence with this character which is the test of the reality of our Christian profession.

¶ It is told of Catherine Booth that one day, when she was a little girl, running along the road with a hoop and stick she saw a drunkard being dragged to the lock-up by a constable. A jeering mob was hooting the unfortunate culprit. His utter loneliness appealed powerfully to her. It seemed that he had not a friend in the world. Quick as lightning Catherine sprang to his side, and marched down the street with him, determined that he should feel that there was at least one heart that sympathized with him, whether it might be for his fault or his misfortune that he was suffering.[1]

3. Can we in any measure, however faulty and imperfect, answer to the call to be 'followers of God,' and to 'have that mind in us which also was in Christ Jesus'? This is the supreme question of our age. The Great War was a judgment which fell upon peoples who raised temples to Christ's honour at every corner of the streets while in all their policies and practical affairs they made pride, self-seeking and aggression their rule of life. These tragic years which have elapsed since the ending of the war have witnessed the dismal spectacle of peoples seeking Utopia without any change of heart. Still the world is like some vast seething cauldron, like the cauldron of the witches in Macbeth, bubbling over with the suspicions and the hatreds and the savage discontents of men, bubbling over with unrest, and seething on its surface with a poisonous evil-smelling scum. As the sons of the Prophets cried to Elisha in the old Bible story, we well may cry: 'O man of God, there is death in the pot.' And there is no antidote to the poison in the pot of human life, no remedy or cure, save the way of Jesus Christ, either in world politics, or in our national and social life.

(1) In *our Imperialism*, whether we will or no, we are being driven towards the way of Christ. We are learning that it is utterly impossible in these days to fulfil the destiny of our great Empire in the spirit or by the methods of empires in the past. The War has not created a new heaven, but it has created a new and most perplexing earth, and presented problems which the wisest minds and most generous hearts can hardly solve. All the East has wakened from its age-long sleep. Even the child races of the world are stirring. Everywhere racialism and nationalism are aflame. The arrogance and the domination of bygone days must go! The self-seeking and the exploitation of bygone days must go. Our greatness must be the greatness of those who serve. Our claim to leadership must be established by virtue of our wide and understanding sympathy, our unselfish and unwearied care for the welfare of those we lead.

(2) In *our social order*, whether we will or no, we are being driven towards the way of Jesus Christ. We know there is much more to be learned than mere hatred of Communism from the dark story of the Russian Revolution. We know that these horrors never could have happened if the more fortunate classes in Russia in former days had lived to serve their fellow-

[1] *The Life of Catherine Booth*, i. 17.

men instead of becoming slaves to 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.' We recognize that while it may be well to dislike the Communistic creed, a thousand times over it is better to remember what is the real danger to our civilization and who are the real enemies of our national and social life. For the real danger which threatens us, infinitely more dangerous than all the attacks aimed at us from outside and all the Communistic influences in our midst, comes from the provocation of the flaunting of a vulgar wealth; from those enemies of society who commit the meanest and most despicable of thefts, taking everything from the common good to gratify their desires, and putting nothing back; from those who live to spend, and not to serve.

¶ Vulgar luxury indecently displayed on every highway and public place has a devastating effect upon the public mind, especially upon that section of it which is seldom free from the cares of penury. That is scattering broadcast the seeds of revolutionary resentment. We sorely need a return to the quiet, cultured decencies of life.[1]

Fellowship, sympathy, service, the mind of Christ, even if it be some poor broken gleam of His pure Spirit brought into our national and social life, we know full well would be sufficient to heal our bitterest divisions and to dispel the worst dangers of our time.

(3) At least we can help the world by practising the teaching in *our own daily life*. Are we patronising or despising any of our fellow-creatures? Are we building up barriers of division between ourselves and our brethren, barriers built by pride of race, of birth, of education, of wealth, or of position? God is the servant of all. He reigns because He serves. He is the greatest because He serves the most. A life lived for pleasure, for ease, for selfish ambitions and self-seeking aims, is in the clear light of heaven a sordid and a shameful life, which no culture and refinement can redeem. True life can only be interpreted in terms of service; in service alone lie its dignity, its meaning, and its worth.[2]

Are we who take
His holy name upon us—calling Him
Our Lord and Master—walking in His steps,
In self-forgetfulness, and stretching out
A helping hand to others? Do we seek
To serve or to be served? O let us take
The lowest place, and yield our willing lives
In ministry to all our fellow-men . . .
A sacrifice well-pleasing in His sight.[1]

[1] Ramsay Macdonald.
[2] F. L. Deane, in *British Preachers*, iii. 40.

Let Christ Serve

A Communion Meditation

Mark x. 45.—'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

The disciples were indignant at what they thought the presumption of two of their number who had advanced special claims to honour in the Kingdom. The imagination of them all was heated by the thought of sitting on thrones and bearing sway of some kind and attaining to honour. The Master taught them the profound lesson that the way to real spiritual greatness is by service. He takes Himself as an illustration of the law, for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The lesson is that we should follow in His steps, and make our religion not merely a getting but a giving, the service of Christ and of the brethren.

But there is another side of religion, suggested by the words of the text though not on the surface. It is that the Son of man came not that we might minister to Him, but that He might minister to us.

1. There is much that we can do for Christ; and the Christian life in its practical aspect is much concerned with Christian duty and Christian service. We have to carry on His work, commend His gospel, fill up even His sufferings, as St Paul declared. Whatever we do in His spirit for men is done for Him. If we are His disciples we will seek to serve Him in the ways that He loved to serve. Inevitable as this is and needful as it is both for our own sake and for the sake of others, yet He did not come that we might do this for Him. He came to do something for us. It is possible for us to be so taken up with all our religious activities that we may forget to wait to let Christ do His work upon ourselves.

This is one of the chief lessons of holy Communion. We bring nothing to the feast except need, nothing except hunger and thirst after righteousness. We do not make the provision:

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 164.

we only come to partake. He is the Giver and the Gift. He prepares the feast, invites us all unworthy, omits not one gracious act of courtesy, breaks the bread, gives us the wine of His love. The Son of man came to minister, let Him minister. It is His pleasure to serve, let Him serve. It is His joy to give, let Him give. We, perhaps, would like to be always serving like Martha, bustling about our little activities. There was a better part than even serving Jesus, a better part which Mary chose. After all, we come to His Table not because we are worthy, not because our faith or love or strength or service gives us a warrant, but just because He asks us, and offers us His love and strength.

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd any thing.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, Who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste My meat:
So I did sit and eat.[1]

2. To some it is hard to make this submission, to own this complete dependence; as in daily life it is hard for some active men to let others do work which they themselves like doing. To some this is the hardest thing to bear in times of illness and weakness. They hate being laid aside and, instead of ministering to others, having others ministering to them. It is partly pride, and partly the unusualness of having others do for them what they used to do for themselves and for others. People who are always well, always strong, always active, have sometimes a certain hardness; and this is often one of the sweet ministries of sickness, that it teaches dependence and willingness to give up and let others bear the burden. That is why sickness so often aids faith; for faith means to be broken of our self-sufficiency and to know our need and our poverty of soul; faith is just to accept humbly and gratefully. It is to submit to the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. It is to confess our need of Him, to let Him take us and feed us and save us and keep us. It is to be willing to take grace as a gift not of merit, to take peace as a gift not an attainment, to take everything as a gift, to be humble and receptive and accept the ministry of the Son of man.

There is a true Quietism which is the heart of all mysticism, in which a man is quiet, submissive, empty of self-will, realizing that the perfect spiritual state is reached not by struggle but by submission, not by the active exercise of will but by waiting on God, that the soul is fed by constant meditation on Divine things, and communion is just opening the heart to let Christ in to sup with us and to serve us. Not our will but His will: not our way but His way: not our work but His work. We cannot spread a feast for the Master, but He furnishes our table for us, and we are content to have it so.

3. Is not this receptiveness the true mood and attitude for us at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? It is *His* Supper. We have no place there except as those who need and who come at His gracious invitation to accept. In Communion we are celebrating not our faith or constancy or love, but His. Christ's love does not depend on our faith, but our faith depends on His love. Our service depends on His love also. We need to feed our faith there if we are to serve Him at all. Before we can do His work we must drink of His spirit and let Him teach us His secret. Before we can serve Him we must be humble enough to let Him serve us. 'Behold,' said Thomas à Kempis, 'all things are Thine which I have and whereby I serve Thee. And yet contrariwise Thou rather servest me than I Thee.'

This is the root of our faith, the source of our strength, and the very heart of our Communion: namely, that the Son of man came not to be

[1] George Herbert.

ministered unto, but to minister. There are other aspects of religion—the fight of faith, the witness to the truth, Christian duties, Christian service, and the whole issue in practice of Christian love—but this first, and this last also, and this all the time, that our spiritual life depends utterly on Christ. The bread and the wine are symbols of this dependence; for they are symbols of His love.[1]

There will not
One loving usage be forgot
By thee; Thy kiss will greet
Us entering; Thou wilt not disdain
To wash away each guilty stain
From off our soilèd feet.
We enter; from this time to prove
Thy hospitality and love
Shown towards the meanest guest.

Christ a Ransom

Mark x. 45.—'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

THE Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many—that was His unique and solitary calling. He had tried to familiarize the minds of His disciples with the fact that His mission of service was to culminate in His death. But now we have for the first time a glimpse, a passing glimpse but still a very real one, into the how and the why He died.

1. This saying of Jesus brings His death before us very clearly as a *voluntary* death. Just before, He had been speaking of it from a different point of view as caused by the malice and wickedness of men. And to that outwardly no doubt it was due. Jesus died as a martyr at the hands of the rulers of the Jews. Like the Prophets and the Baptist before Him, He preached righteousness to an unrighteous world, and paid with His life the penalty of His daring. So regarded, Jesus' death may be described as a *martyr-death*, one more martyr-death in history. He chose a death which stood for the uttermost of shame and disgrace and condemnation—the very name of which Cicero declares ought not to be mentioned in well-bred Roman society—rather than be untrue to the witness He felt Himself called to proclaim. So regarded, the death of Jesus is one of a class comparable to the death of Socrates or of Stephen or of any other of the noble army of martyrs by whose courage and unselfish devotion to the highest interests the world's progress in truth and righteousness is determined. It is indeed the first and highest of the martyr series of deaths, the supreme illustration in human history of the law that in a world of sin the righteous must suffer for the guilty, the highest exemplification of the principle which even Plato, the pre-Christian Greek philosopher, already foresaw and formulated in these striking words in his *Republic*, that in an unjust world 'the just or righteous man will be scourged, racked, bound, and at last, after suffering every kind of evil, be impaled (or crucified).'[1]

But that was only one aspect of His death. Perhaps the most astonishing thing about it, as Dante has remarked, is that in one and the same death both God and the Jews rejoiced. And when we think of Jesus' death from the Divine side, it is its freewill character that at once impresses us. In the New Testament it is never viewed as a catastrophe to which Jesus was compelled by circumstances outside His own control, but as a fact whose significance and glory lay in its entirely voluntary self-chosen character. He laid down His life of Himself. Corporal Smith of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, throwing himself on the grenade that had slipped from the grasp of his comrade in the trench, and willingly and deliberately giving his own life that others might be saved. It is after this manner that the New Testament uniformly represents the death of Jesus. It is after this manner that Jesus, too, represented the case. 'I lay down my life of my own accord,' 'no one takes it from me.' He suffered because it was His will to suffer. If He had chosen to avoid the humiliation and anguish of the Cross He might have done so. But according to Himself there was a great needs-be about His death, not an external necessity or compulsion as of circumstances outside of His control, but an inner constraint and compelling which led Him on free-willingly until it was accomplished.

The Son of man came to give—with all the freedom involved in the very thought of giving—'his life a ransom for many.' It may seem

[1] Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, 23.

[1] J. M. Shaw, *The Christian Gospel of the Fatherhood of God*, 113.

hardly necessary to emphasize this, so obvious a truth, were it not that rightly understood it cuts at the root of a common popular misconception regarding the Atonement. For is there not still a tendency in some quarters to think of Christ's death as a sacrifice wrung from Him, if not an unwilling at least a passive sufferer? But here He shows us Himself an active willing agent in it all. His offering was a voluntary offering. His life was His own life to give or not, as He pleased. And it was not the death of Christ in itself, but the will and the love lying behind the death, that made it acceptable in the sight of God.

¶ A young French soldier, very white and weak, lay on a hospital cot. A surgeon who had just amputated his shattered arm stood looking sympathetically at the drawn face. 'I am very sorry,' he said, 'that you had to lose your arm.' Then the soldier's eyes opened, and he said with an accent of indignant protest, 'I did not lose it; I gave it.' [1]

2. But Jesus has more to tell us about His death than that. He tells us that He gave Himself a *ransom* for many. The figure seems at first sight a very simple one. But we must guard against the insidious view which regards the ransom as paid to God. All sin, we are told, is of the nature of debt due to God. God cannot forgive sin, that is to say, forgive the debt due to His honour, without first of all receiving a payment in full. And such a payment the death of Christ, bearing our sin in its exact burden and measure, could alone provide. We see the glimmerings of truth underlying such a theory in the emphasis laid upon God's justice and man's responsibility. But how reconcile it in the hard material form in which it is thus presented, with the free unconditional love of God in which we have been taught that our salvation begins? It was because 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son.' The love came before the giving; and not only after the sacrifice was complete. As the hymn has it:

> Oh 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
> The love of *God* to me;
> It brought my Saviour from above
> To die on Calvary.

[1] H. E. Fosdick.

All such theories err in pressing the figure of 'ransom' too far. Christ says nothing here of ransom paid to a person, and we are more likely to arrive at His meaning if, observing the same reserve, we think of 'ransom' simply in its general wide sense as the means of redemption, deliverance, freedom. Jesus thinks of man as enslaved to the dark powers of sin and of death, and He teaches that by His death man has been set free from the slavery in which he is held. But we cannot do full justice to the very idea of 'ransom,' still less to the idea of *ransom for*, or, as the original undoubtedly implies, 'ransom instead of many,' without recognizing that in some—what to us must always be mysterious—way Jesus represents Himself as securing our deliverance by Himself taking our place. It is because He—the representative Head of our Humanity—served and suffered to the uttermost for us that man is free.

¶ Christ did for men in relation to God, and on the scale of the world's sin, something which man could not do for himself, and which did really and for ever change the moral situation as between God and man.[1]

3. In the sacrifice of Him who submits as Son of man because He loves with all the love of God we reach the centre of that spiritual universe in which we live, where opposites meet, where contradictions are reconciled, where God and man are made one in a covenant which cannot be broken. Even to a Paul this is 'the love that passeth knowledge.' Yet even the least of saints may know something of the length and breadth and depth and height, for he knows by experience something of the sacrificial principle in his own life. No one can understand the Cross like one who has taken up the cross: there is a living sympathy between his heart and the heart of Christ. In other words, it is hard to understand the Atonement, as it were, from the outside. But seen from the inside, it becomes no mere dogma but salvation itself, the meeting of the love of God and the sin of man until the victory remains with love.[2]

¶ Love cannot be interpreted from the outside. . . . In this strange new world, where to gain the life is to lose it, we are but little at home. There the best of men are only newcomers and learners. Yet we cannot have any

[1] J. K. Mozley, in *Fundamentals of the Faith*, 84.
[2] J. M. E. Ross, *The Tree of Healing*, 94.

of God's love without understanding in some measure the unity and solidarity between Creator and creature by which goodness suffers and unworthiness profits.[1]

¶ The drama of redemption is revealed in the attitude of Daniel Peggotty to Emily in *David Copperfield*, after the catastrophe which bowed both their heads in woe. The old man does not pass by on the other side of the road or withhold his affection. Without a moment of doubt or hesitation he extends the hand of unquestioning love and support. He was joined with his daughter in bearing her shame because of the bond of love between them and became sin for her. There is no blurring of moral judgment upon sin. Although Daniel Peggotty's love is not diminished by what has happened, it has now taken on a penitential quality. One could say that the sin was all Emily's, and that it is impossible for a father to be penitent for the sins of his child; and yet we know that that is just what happens. Just for Emily to see her old father entering into her suffering was enough to make her loathe sin and understand what love is.[2]

Goodness has suffered and we, the unworthy, profit. The Atonement in reality and in power is the beginning of that life of reconciliation in which God and His children walk together, nothing between.

Blind Bartimæus

Mark x. 51.—'The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.'

1. This story is perfect in its simplicity, in its transparent truth. Blind Bartimæus sitting by the wayside, just outside one of the gates of Jericho, hears the stir of an unwonted excitement and joy. The whole city seems to be pouring through the gate. He asks, according to Luke, what is the cause of the bustle, and is told that 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.' It was a nine-days' wonder, no doubt, and a tremendous excitement that so famous a person should visit their little town; how many of them guessed that Destiny was passing close to them in the passing of Jesus, and that this same Jesus would pass down through the ages carrying destiny with Him wherever He should go? This one man, at least, was determined not to lose his chance. 'He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.' Perhaps the Master was teaching as He slowly walked along, and the crowd resented the tiresome interruption; or, more likely, they regarded the beggar's intrusion as an affront to a distinguished Person. 'And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.' A cry like that could not be in vain when Jesus of Nazareth passed by. So 'Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.' Casting aside his garment, the blind beggar hastened forward, asked for sight, received the gift, and used his sight to 'follow Jesus in the way.'

It is hard to believe, amid all this laughter, song, and thanksgiving, that, up among the grim hills which rise yonder above Jericho, Jerusalem waits, with the Cross in reserve. But Christ did not forget. And perhaps the first lesson for us is this, that even when He was 'going up to Jerusalem,' He was not so absorbed in His own sorrow that He forgot the wayside beggar or the ordinary casual opportunities of helping human lives. On the way—and such a way, the way that ended in the *Via Dolorosa*—He had a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize. And, if we read it aright, this story should once and for all remove any fears we have that we are too obscure and insignificant for God to pay any heed to us.

¶ In Velasquez' picture, *Christ at the Column*, we see Jesus in an agony, immediately after being scourged by the Roman soldiers. His hands are black through stoppage of blood circulation, so tightly have they tied His wrists to the column. But the artist represents Him as having leisure enough, even in the midst of His anguish, to turn with tender look and kindly speech towards a boy who has become the accidental witness of His suffering.

2. This episode convinces us of the all-important fact that Jesus comes to those who cannot come to Him. We are not to imagine that when, in answer to his inquiries, Bartimæus was told, 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by,' that was the first he had heard of Him. Beggars of the East, more even than their fellow-mendicants of the West, have a kind of freemasonry

[1] J. Oman.
[2] G. Stewart, *The Crucifixion in our Street*, 19.

among themselves, and Bartimæus was sure to have heard of this wonderful teacher, who was a doctor as well, and who could give hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind. More than that, Bartimæus had had his own reflections, and had come to his own conclusions. He had made up his mind that Jesus was more than a mere proficient physician, that He was nothing less than the promised Messiah of God so long looked for by the Jews. This is the meaning of his oft-repeated cry in which he addresses Jesus as 'Thou son of David.' But the problem had been not how to get to know about Christ, but how to get into touch with Him. How could he, a poor blind man, with many acquaintances no doubt, and not a few patrons, but very few friends, how could he, in his darkness and helplessness, set out in search of this Preacher, who was always on the move from place to place? All that he could do was to sit in the dust and keep silence until Jesus came to him. And that is just what happened. That is what happens every time that Jesus brings light to a man who is sitting in darkness. The initiative lies not with us but with Christ. Jesus had to come to him. No Christian man, it has been said, reviewing his own past, would dream of saying that at such and such a date he took up Christianity, as quite naturally he might say that he took up golf, or chess, or big-game shooting. He cannot but acknowledge that above and beyond his own choice there lay the redemptive intention and initiative of Almighty God.

¶ Here is how the Swiss theologian, Gaston Frommel, Professor in the University of Geneva, described his own religious experience: 'I was following out my life, pursuing my own desires, when Christ advanced to meet me, placed Himself before me, and barred my way. He stopped me. He made a silence in my heart. And then He held with me a solemn interview in which He spoke as He alone can speak.'

3. It is interesting to observe from this story how the coming of Christ deepens a man's sense of need. Long ago Bartimæus had reached the stage of sullen acquiescence in his affliction. He had even learned to make a livelihood by it. If on any other day than this some kindly stranger had asked him what his desires were, his answer would have been quite trivial. He would have said that he needed bread and money and a hand to help him across the street, things without a touch of miracle in them. And if he had been given these things he would have been perfectly content. But to-day it was different. The rumour of Christ's approach made him a new man, and set him trembling in every limb. His whole way of life seemed suddenly to become sordid and distasteful. As the Light of the World drew nigh, Bartimæus felt more keenly than ever he had done the bitterness of his blindness, and he felt it become more dense and dark than ever. So he cried out in a frenzy which would brook no interruption, 'Jesus, have mercy upon me.'

Now, that is Christ's way still. Often God's first way of taking us out of darkness is to shine upon that darkness with His light so that the gloom is only deepened and made more repulsive. Think, for example, of Simon Peter. Peter was a blunt and burly fisherman. The perplexities of the student were unknown to him. He was a man of the open-air, of quick impulse, simple in feeling and sound in heart. He had no vicious life to deplore. He stood well out of the shadows. His wants were few and easily satisfied. Yet when Jesus came to him and said, 'Follow me,' a shadow which was both literal and figurative fell upon his life, and there soon came a day when he cried, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' The coming of Jesus darkened his life with a sense of sin and unholiness and so deepened his sense of need. But of course that darkness was only due to the approach of Light, and was preparatory, as in the case of Bartimæus, to his complete illumination. The day came when Peter in a letter to some of his friends spoke of Christ as having brought him 'out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

Has the approach of Christ the same effect upon us? Is there a sense of restlessness and dissatisfaction within us? Do we feel that clouds and thick darkness are round about us? If so, it is a wholesome sign. Our Lord is leading us further into the darkness that He may bring us finally to the light.

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,
Had followed where comforts and pleasures led,
Until one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,
Much thought for my body but none for my soul,
I had entered to win in life's big race,
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him and blushed to see
That His eyes full of sorrow were fixed on me.
I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles melted and vanished away,
Melted, and vanished, and in their place
Nought else did I see but the Master's face.

And I cried aloud 'Oh make me meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet.'
My thought is now for the souls of men,
I have lost my life to find it again,
Ere since one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

4. Notice from this story what is the only thing that arrests Jesus. Our Lord always yielded to those who would take no nay. All the rougher forces in the world could not turn Him aside a step; but the importunate prayer of a beggar or a Syrophœnician woman could get anything from Him. Persistency never failed to open the floodgates of His power. This man had learned the secret of success, whether in things heavenly or things earthly. He cried for the one thing he wanted until he got it. 'What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?'

It is as true now of the Risen Christ as of the Jesus of Palestine long ago that He is to be won only by the importunate. The Light of the World comes to all. But He thrusts Himself on none. As in the case of the Emmaus disciples long ago, when He has been in our presence long enough for us to get to know Him He makes as though He would go further, and we must then constrain Him to abide with us or He will pass on.

¶ In looking at Holman Hunt's great picture, 'The Light of the World,' did you ever happen to observe the Feet rather than the Face of the Saviour? If so, you would notice that they are not turned towards the door but towards the roadway. If Christ does not get admission, if there is no response from behind that sealed portal, at which He is knocking, not with clenched fist but with gentle half-open hand, Christ will pass on.

5. Finally, notice from this story that Christ never leaves a man as He finds him. The last glimpse we have of Bartimæus is a very happy one. It shows him no longer stationary, no longer unable to move without some friendly hand to guide him. It shows him following Jesus in the way. Sight has brought freedom and activity. And it has brought more than that. It has brought joy and exultation as well. For what follows immediately upon this incident? Nothing less than the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in which the people spread palm branches and their own garments on the road, that Christ may pass over them on His colt, and in which also they cry, 'Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Who has taught them that phrase 'son of David'? Have they caught it from the lips of Bartimæus? Once he said, 'Have mercy upon me, thou son of David.' He now says, 'Hosanna to the son of David.' May we not believe that Bartimæus was one of that joyful band who sang round Jesus their chorus of love and praise?

Thou also hast received thy sight.
A Hand hath touched thine eyes, and lo! thy night
Is changed for day:
Wilt thou not follow Jesus in the way?
Hath He no claim on thee
By whom alone thou now canst see?
Yea, rise and follow on
Where He hath gone.
Walk in His footsteps; His own burden take,
And live thy life henceforward for His sake.

The Colt that carried the King

Mark xi. 2.—'A colt . . . whereon never man sat.'

It is St Matthew who tells us that two animals figured in the procession when our Lord rode in triumph into His capital. There was an ass—a noble, honoured beast—and then along with it there was the ass's colt. Both belonged to some one Jesus knew; probably to some one He had saved. Both were secured not far from Bethany, at a little hamlet called the House of Figs. And both were taken by the two disciples, and brought to the village for the Master's use, and seemingly both were used in the procession. The point to note is, that according to all the

Gospels it was not upon the ass that Jesus mounted. He looked at both of them for one brief instant, and then deliberately chose the colt. And in a life like His, where everything is vital, and the slightest action of vast importance, reverent thought cannot ignore that choice. Can we in any measure understand it?

1. *An Assertion of Kingliness.*—Jesus made this choice as a quiet assertion of His kingliness. He chose, and He quite deliberately chose, the animal on which man had never sat. That ass had long been used in burden-bearing and had, no doubt, often carried its master to the market-place. For wife and children it was good enough. For priest or Pharisee nothing could be better. Even for Jesus, in His lowly ministry, it would have been a welcome ease in travelling. But now He was not Jesus but The Christ. He was claiming for one brief hour His royal prerogative. And He lifts Himself up into unique supremacy by choosing a beast whereon man had never sat. Long ago, down by the banks of Jordan, a very different scene had been enacted. With publicans and with soldiers and with sinners He had been baptized in the flowing Jordan. *There* He had stood where common men had stood. *Here* He sat where never man had sat.

And is not this the abiding mystery of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? He was a man of sorrows and knew our human frailty; and yet He stands apart, confronting us for ever. No desperate sinner but knew Christ understood him; no wearied woman but felt He was her friend; no innocent child but saw in those eyes something that witnessed to the thought of love. And yet, with all that infinite compassion and understanding, His soul was as a star and dwelt apart. He is nearer and dearer than the most loved brother, and yet He is mysterious and alone. And, when we come to understand His power, and to trust Him, and in loyalty to follow Him, slowly and surely He emerges for us into an incommunicable grandeur. Many a youth begins by putting Christ on the saddle where other men have sat. They put Him beside Socrates and Plato, or give Him His place by Hegel and by Kant. And then the years go by, and troubles come, and no one can help and save but 'Jesus only': He is on the colt whereon man had never sat.

¶ An Oxford lady of the intellectual type once said airily to the late Professor Jowett at a dinner-party, 'And what do you think of Jesus Christ?' 'Madam,' was the reply, 'that is not the question. The question is: What does Jesus Christ think of me?'

2. *The Nature of Christ's Kingliness.*—In the second place, by His choice of the colt, Jesus intended to indicate not only the fact but the nature of His kingliness. Jesus chose the colt to emphasize His lowliness. It was as if He said: 'The reason why I want you to take My yoke upon you is because I am meek and lowly in heart.' After all, there was very little appearance of the trappings of a king about Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. A military monarch, entering into the city, would have ridden upon a war-horse. A merchant magnate of those days would have had for his steed some noble and honoured Arab ass, but Jesus rode in upon a shaggy colt, unkempt and uncombed. At best it was a borrowed steed, obtained only on condition of its immediate return, and its trappings were the torn and weather-stained cloaks of peasants and fishermen. If the crowds that day hailed Jesus as the Messiah it cannot have been solely, or even mainly, on account of any pomp or ceremonial connected with the occasion, but because of some shining quality inherent in Jesus Himself, a kingliness of character and bearing, which, for all His modesty and meekness, could not be hid. Blaise Pascal in a brilliant passage compares emperors and conquerors of his day with Archimedes, who fought no battles, who did nothing to attract attention, but who made certain quiet discoveries that have contributed much to the life and the service of the world. And he says, 'Though he did not catch the eye, how he blazed out before the mind.' But the words are truer still of Jesus. For what is the true kingliness of Christ? Is it not the kingliness of a quiet and a meek and a forgiving spirit? The kingliness of the Prince of Peace, who abhors methods that are loud and ostentatious and warlike.

I saw the conquerors riding by
With cruel lips and faces wan;
Musing on kingdoms sacked and burned
There rode the Mongol, Ghenghis Khan;

And Alexander, like a God,
Who sought to wield the world in one;
And Cæsar with his laurel-wreath;
And, leaping full of hell, the Hun;

And, leading like a star, the van,
Heedless of outstretched arm and groan,
Inscrutable Napoleon went,
Dreaming of empire, and alone.

Then all they perished from the earth
As fleeting shadow from a glass,
And, conquering down the centuries,
Came Christ, the Swordless, on an ass.

3. *A Type of Jesus' Methods.*—Jesus meant this choice to typify His methods. It was a quiet and a kindly parable of the kind of choice which He loves to make. In the East the ass was held in honour. It was a fine creature, often as large as a small horse. Its bridle was studded with silver or with shells; its saddle was often elegant with tassels; it was associated in the people's thought with many a striking and historic scene. Now think of the striking contrast between that and the colt: the one a trained and comfortable animal, the other a wild and shaggy little creature; the one accustomed to these crowded roads and going to take it easy whatever happened, the other rude and stubborn and intractable, filled with the fiery energy of youth. No Hosannas would disturb the one; it was entirely safe and most entirely reputable. But the other, never broken in as yet—no man could guarantee what it would do. Had He been thinking only of His comfort, our Lord would certainly have chosen the ass. But we never read that in any choice made by Him He thought of His safety or His comfort. It is not the first time, and it is not the last, that He has surprised the world by the servants He has chosen—the shaggy, fiery, and unbroken instruments—for the advancement of His glory.

(1) One thinks, for instance, of the first disciples, and of what manner of instruments they were. We have only to read the record of the Gospels to apprehend that they were coltish men. In Palestine, in the period of our Saviour, there was considerable culture of a kind. There were men who were thoroughly trained and broken in by years of patient study of antiquity. There was a whole class known by the name of Pharisees, who walked in an odour of unquestioned sanctity, and who stood in the eyes of all the common people for everything that was respectable and safe. The strange thing is that when Jesus made His choice, it was not any of such persons that He chose. He had no interest in conventionality; His only interest was in possibility. He did not want men who were broken *in*; He wanted men who were ready to break *out*, on a dead world that must be won for heaven. That was why He chose those fiery natures; those untempered and unbroken men. It was a very daring choice to make. There were times when it actually seemed to be a failure. There were times when their stumbling and foolish obstinacy had almost broken the heart of the Redeemer. And perhaps when He chose the colt that morning, instead of the sleek and comfortable creature, Peter and James and John would understand. They would feel that Christ had not repented. It would tell them that had He to choose again, His choice would not be made on different lines.

¶ Erasmus for all his cleverness and scholarship would never have brought about the Reformation unaided. It needed a miner's son, 'grand, rough, old Martin Luther,' as Robert Browning called him, to rend the petrified dignity of mediæval Christendom. And so right through, when God needs a man to break through the irreligion and secularism of England, He passes by the safe leaders of the orthodox Church, and takes George Whitefield from behind the bar of the Bell Inn, in Gloucester, to be His Evangelist.[1]

(2) How often Christ has used the rugged word, and left the most polished sermon ineffectual! How often has He owned the boisterous hymn, and put to shame with it the praise of organs! How often has He come in power and triumph, over the valley of our human need, on the rough creature which was never trained, and which no self-respecting Rabbi would have used. All that, in kindly acted parable, is typified in this action of Palm Sunday. It is Christ saying to us, 'When ye see this colt, ye shall remember the Lord's ways until He come.' And that is always needed by the Church when she waits for the ringing of the bridle-bells, and thinks that Christ will never come to her, save on the sumptuous and splendid saddle.'[2]

[1] D. C. Mitchell, *The Nonsense of Neutrality*, 111.
[2] G. H. Morrison, *The Wind on the Heath*, 115.

Palm Sunday

Mark xi. 9.—'And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

It was on the first day of the Passover week that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In Galilee He had kept His Messiahship veiled, and He forbade the noising abroad of His wonderful works. Again and again, when excitement and enthusiasm were growing high, He would escape from the crowds, and hide Himself in some solitude beyond their reach. But now He announces Himself as the Messiah of God—the time for a policy of reserve is past.

1. On this day of His final approach to the capital He chose a symbolic act to show forth His mind. There was a dramatic deliberateness in His action as though He set Himself to fulfil certain ancient hopes and promises. Every reader of Zechariah's prophecy—and there would be no one in Jerusalem who had not read it or heard it a hundred times—would be immediately reminded that Jesus was silently appealing to the judgment of the city by making an entry of this kind. The words would immediately occur to them, the familiar passionate words, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass!' Our Western minds are entirely unaccustomed to this symbolic mode of appeal. Modern parallels such as a manifesto issued, placarded on the walls or circulated from hand to hand, seem very commonplace when put side by side with this natural and instinctive poetry.

The carefully arranged procession would tell its own tale directly it began. When the people from the walls, or those who were gathered about the gates according to the custom of an Eastern city, observed the crowd coming down the slope of Olivet, through the olive yards and across the Kedron, then mounting the rock under the very battlements of the Temple, there would not be one that missed the significance of it. 'This man claims to be He that was to come; the Prophet from Nazareth, of whose deeds and words our ears have been full all these months past, is coming in at the gate, and He is announcing distinctly that He regards Himself as the promised Messiah, the one of whom the prophets have spoken—approaching the city upon an ass, the foal of an ass—the King at whose coming the daughter of Zion was to rejoice.'

The pilgrims knew what it meant, and they rent the air with the cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' Many of them were Galileans who had seen in their own region the wonderful works of Jesus, and rejoiced to hail a prophet who was one of themselves. They let themselves go. They gave Him a royal progress. They spread their garments in the way as for a king and a conqueror. 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

> Ride on! ride on in majesty!
> In lowly pomp ride on to die.
> O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
> O'er captive death and conquered sin.
>
> Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
> In lowly pomp ride on to die.
> Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain;
> Then take, O God, Thy power, and reign.'[1]

2. It seemed as if on that day the Lord had reached the zenith of His popularity. He suffered it all. He did not attempt to check the people. He seemed to be glad indeed that children's voices were lifting up to Him a song of praise. But He was not deceived by this boisterous welcome. He saw the shadow of the Cross among the palm branches. In those Eastern lands the fair blue sky smiles with the serenity of heaven almost up to the moment when it bursts in thunder clouds and quivering lightning; and the people are like their skies. They had Hallelujahs for Him to-day and praises. They would have anathemas, and nails, not many days hence. Palm Sunday with its glorious welcome, and Friday with its awful tragedy. The contrast was so complete, and so swiftly wrought, that it seems even now incredible and inexplicable. It is St John alone who tells us that it was not the people of Jerusalem who gave Him that welcome. It was the visitors, chiefly from Galilee, who streamed out to do Him that honour—people who had come up to the Passover feast from the Northern towns and villages in which He had done most of His mighty works. Jerusalem always received Him coldly, because it was hardened and priest-

[1] H. H. Milman.

enslaved, beyond all other spots in the Holy Land. It was in that later and fiercer tumult by which He was hounded to His death that Jerusalem found voice. We may well believe that there were some of the Galileans in the crowd on that Crucifixion day who had not turned round so completely as the surface reading of the story would show. But a few sane men are lost in a maddened crowd; they are overawed into silence. We say a crowd is of one mind when we hear its deafening shouts; yet in it there are sure to be some whose voices are drowned in the louder hubbub, or silent through fear. Have we not sometimes been overawed in this manner? Have we not heard the good reviled, the cause which we love derided, the religion which we believe in ridiculed, and yet have made no protest? Our sympathies were right, but we were powerless to enforce them, or had not courage to utter them.

Light words they were, and lightly, falsely said;
She heard them, and she started—and she rose,
As in the act to speak; the sudden thought
And unconsidered impulse led her on.
In act to speak she rose, but with the sense
Of all the eyes of that mixed company
Now suddenly turned upon her, some with age
Hardened and dulled, some cold and critical;
Some in whom vapours of their own conceit,
As moist malarious mists the heavenly stars,
Still blotted out their good, the best at best
By frivolous laugh and prate conventional
All too untuned for all she thought to say—
With such a thought the mantling blood to her cheek
Flushed-up, and o'er-flushed itself, blank night her soul
Made dark, and in her all her purpose swooned.
She stood as if for sinking. Yet anon
With recollections clear, august, sublime,
Of God's great truth, and right immutable,
Which, as obedient vassals, to her mind
Came summoned of her will, in self-negation
Quelling her troublous earthy consciousness,
She queened it o'er her weakness. At the spell
Back rolled the ruddy tide, and leaves her cheek
Paler than erst, and yet not ebbs so far
But that one pulse of one indignant thought
Might hurry it hither in flood. So as she stood
She spoke. God in her spoke, and made her heard.[1]

[1] Clough, *Ambarvalia.*

3. And yet we may say that the intervening days did change the attitude of the crowd. Many things happened in those few days which were of a kind to turn the sentiments and work upon the passions of an ignorant multitude. Those four days were crowded with incidents which were calculated to arouse the prejudices and inflame the fury of Jerusalem. Christ had a witness to bear against Jerusalem, its iniquity and falseness, its covetousness and pride, its hollow Pharisaism, its crafty priests, its unjust rulers, its dead and corrupt religion. That witness must be borne, and it would mean the kindling of a wrath that would be fatal to Him. He drove out the traders from the Temple and made them all His enemies. Then He grievously offended the zealous patriots by advising the people to pay tribute unto Cæsar. And, finally, He uttered those woes against the Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, which we cannot read to-day without a shudder. It was all true, it was all needed. It was the Divine righteousness in Him, and the intense hatred of sin, that compelled Him to speak. But He knew that He was signing His death sentence.

If we think of all that, we can understand what influences were at work turning the hearts of the very people who had sung Hosannas to Him. Traders, rulers, politicians, Scribes, rich men, lawyers, priests, and Pharisees went about everywhere whispering, slandering, defaming, undermining, with all the craft of malice and the astuteness of perverted intellect and knowledge. For the lying tongue was as powerful then as it is to-day, and all the more powerful in this case, because sharpened with cleverness and weighted with religious authority. And so it came about that the Hallelujahs of Palm Sunday became the execrations of the next Friday.

¶ 'I lived for my country,' said Louis Kossuth, 'and therefore I die in exile.'

4. Surely it is worth thinking of—the King had come 'to his own' and 'his own' received Him not.

(1) It should *help us all to bear our sorrows and disappointments,* to bear hours of misjudgment and perhaps of slander, if we remember how He was maligned and accused of crimes and plotted against. And every one who reads this story learns a little of the Master's patience. Palm Sunday bids us also go steadily on in our

Christian course. We are not to be too much elated by temporary triumphs and successes, or cast down by the fickleness of those among whom we work. It was on that very Sunday, when He foresaw immediately before Him the coming desolation and forsakenness, that our Lord spoke His most magnificent word of hope and final victory: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' The passing popularity did not deceive Him; the crushing defeat and humiliation did not depress Him. He marched steadily on, Master of circumstance and of Himself, to the final and glorious result.

(2) Another word which Palm Sunday speaks to all of us is *a word of solemn watchfulness and warning*. Let us take care that our Hosannas are not put aside and forgotten in the following week-days. It is easy to spread offerings of adoration at the feet of our King when the crowd is with us. But when we go out among men that love Him not, men who have no sympathy with His cause, we will be tempted in many ways to be unfaithful to Him and deny Him.

¶ Mr J. B. Priestley has an illuminating sentence concerning the late Dr A. Clutton-Brock. He says that he was 'the kind of man who could think about God on Monday morning.'

It is easier far to applaud Christ than it is to obey Him; to cheer Him, than to do His will. But it is obedience He asks for. If He is King, and we acknowledge Him as such, He wants our loyal and unhesitating allegiance, our faithful service. Are we giving it? Do we sing in church, 'Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ,' and then by our actions often say, 'We will not have this man to reign over us'? It is obedience Christ wants. He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me and is the loyal subject of the King.

The City of Mansoul

Mark xi. 9.—'And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

THERE is much in a human nature, in a human soul, that is like—at least, that may be fitly represented by—the marvellously interesting life of a great city. There is the same mixture of many elements which yet make a true unity. In a soul, as in a city, there may be internal conflict and dissension, while yet at any moment the distracted soul, like the distracted city, will turn as one being to resist an invader from without. A man, like a city, has a corporate will, and does actions from which, nevertheless, much that is in him may dissent. The same sort of bewildered but yet true and effective personality which is in a city is what thoughtful and earnest men are always recognizing in themselves.

So, without too great fancifulness, we may picture the approach of Jesus to our souls under the figure of His entrance into Jerusalem. He comes to us as He came to that city of His and of His Father's. We cannot be indifferent to Him. And there does not come out one clear, simple utterance of reception or rejection, any more than Jerusalem was unanimous and prompt to receive or to reject the Saviour when He came to her. From the soul, as from the city, come various answers, uttering the various portions of its complex life.

1. There is in every soul something that spontaneously welcomes Christ. It makes the basis to which the power of the Saviour always immediately appeals. There is a childlike element in every heart which, when He, that bright, strong, Divine Presence, is presented, immediately knows Him and goes out to meet Him, as *the children and the common people* streamed out on Palm Sunday to meet the coming Christ. There is something of the child, something of the common humanity, in every man. And there is something, too, of discontent, something of a sense of unfulfilment. There is a readiness to hear any voice that promises release and the lifting of horizons and the dawning of a larger day. And, deeper still, there is an aching consciousness of wickedness that is a mixture of despair and hope, but always has more of hope in it than despair; there is a sense of sin wanting forgiveness. It is this part of our nature, the child part, the needy part, this part which either by loftiness or lowness is ready for new things, that spontaneously welcomes Jesus, crying, 'Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

2. But now turn to some other parts in us and see how they receive Him, see how they correspond to elements which were in the

streets of Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. There were sceptics there—groups of *Sadducees* who looked with a sort of superior pity upon the whole transaction. They turned aside to let the crowd sweep by, and then looked after it and shook their heads, with that sort of pity which is at the heart of pride. The pride that hates is never so intensely supercilious as the pride that pities. And in our hearts who of us has not realized the presence of that sort of pride; who of us has not found the sceptical part of himself pitying the faithful part for what it counted the childish folly of being inclined to accept a supernatural Redeemer? When have we prayed to God with such perfect sense of His nearness and His love, that alongside our faith there has not been something of self-pity—a superior, indulgent sort of toleration of our own weakness in needing to pray and in venturing to pray? Many souls know that experience; the child in us prays while the man in us stands by and pities. So also with obedience. There is a part of us that tries to obey our Master; tries to do right because it is His will. But when we are called upon in any way to give an account of our efforts after righteousness, how quickly another part of us springs forward and hastily flings a veil of lower motive over this devotion and personal obedience, as if it were ashamed of it! It is the sceptical part of us disowning the faithful part.

3. But in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday there were not only those who doubted Christ, there were also some people who hated Christ; some people who felt that either He or they must give way and go out. There were the *Pharisees*, who saw in Jesus the contradiction of all their most treasured traditions and favourite ideas; and there were the men whom He had rebuked for all their different kinds of sin—the cheats, the liars, the blasphemers, the haters, the impure. The Pharisee said, 'If what this Teacher says is true, all that I say is false.' The sinner said, 'If what this Master commands is right, my life is horrible.' Between each of these men and Jesus there was war to the death. Now if there is in our heart any hard, selfish, narrow notion of religion which we would have to see cast out before the breadth and the humility of the gospel faith could take entire possession of our soul, then we have within us an element which corresponds exactly to what the Pharisees were in Jerusalem. And if we are living in sins of any sort which we do not mean to give up, and which Christ hates, with which He cannot live, then there is that in us which hates Christ. For hate is not merely an excited emotion; it is a moral antagonism. Still we may love Christ, too, at the same time; for, with all our unity, we are this mixed Jerusalem. We have had little of the deepest experience of life if we have not learned long before this that Christ may be hated by the part of our nature with which He interferes and which will not yield to Him, with a hate all the deeper for the affection with which at the same moment another part of our nature is rejoicing in His love.

4. There is still another element in the population of Jerusalem. Stalking about among the native Jewish people were the figures of the *Roman soldiers* who constituted the garrison with which the conquerors held the now subject city. As they walked the streets a brutal insolence mingled with a superb contempt in the cold curiosity with which they scrutinized the strange people whom they had been sent to guard. They had no sympathy with the mysterious spiritual associations by which they found themselves surrounded. All they wanted was to keep the peace, to prevent an outbreak. Truth, spirituality, eternal life—all these meant nothing to them. They were mere power and mere system, earthly order embodied, as they stood watching Christ's procession through the streets on Sunday. What better picture could we have of that which so many men know only too well as a true element in their internal life? A hard worldly corner of our nature, to which all spiritual truths seem to make their appeal in vain; an iron unsusceptibility to all enthusiasm; a disposition to organize life upon its lower plane, and to think of religious impulses and aspirations only as the disturbers of the peace; materialism; selfishness; the tyranny of sense—what an element that is in all of us! We grow to dread it more than almost any of the others. Often we forget the sneer of the Sadducee and the hate of the Pharisee when our eye is caught and fastened by that stony stare of the Roman soldier, too utterly cold and far away from all that we hold dear to

feel either anger or scorn. And it is terrible when we find him even in ourselves.

So Jesus came into Jerusalem at once as an Intruder and a King. There were men along the streets who owed to Him the straightness of their limbs, the sight of their eyes, the clear, sane reason of their brains. They made the old streets ring with shouts of welcome. There were other men whom He had disappointed and defeated. He had trampled on their traditions, contradicted their doctrines, spoiled their trade. The city was divided against itself. But through it all Jesus held on His way, claiming the town for His town because it was His Father's. And so He claims our hearts. At once an Intruder and a King He seems to those hearts as He stands there on their threshold. There is something in every one of them that says to Him, 'Come in, come in!' There is something, too, in every one of them that rises up at His coming and says, 'Begone! We will not have this Man to rule over us.'

But the struggle in any heart cannot go on forever. It must decide. It must say decisively, 'Come' or 'Go.' He never will go until we obstinately bid Him. He cannot come into the inmost temple until we welcome Him.

As the wide water spreadeth on the land,
With mighty softness taking every place,
Until the flood alone doth all-wheres stand;
So doth the Presence of the King at hand
In mildest conquest make its way apace,
Till all is held and mastered by His grace.

The Intimates of Jesus

Mark xi. 11.—'And now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany.'

1. MANY may feel a certain wistfulness of desire, shadowed by regret, when they read this story of Bethany. There comes the reflection that this passing of Jesus into the home and this mingling with its life can never be repeated. Were not these New Testament saints given a privilege which no other can ever share? They came near to Jesus and saw Him in the flesh. They sat at His feet and lay in His bosom. They ministered to Him out of their substance. He was the honoured guest at their table, and they broke the precious spikenard over His hands and His feet. They carried His cross, and they gave Him a grave. They saw the print of the nails. But these things will not be repeated. He will never again sit weary by any earthly well. He will never again come when the night is falling, travel-stained and hungry, to any earthly door. So there comes this sense that the great days of nearness to Jesus have passed away.

Poor Lazarus shall wait in vain,
And Bartimæus still go blind;
The healing hem shall ne'er again
Be touched by suffering humankind.

But are we not forgetting one of the most central truths of the Christian faith? We believe in that Jesus of Nazareth who lived and died and rose again from the dead. We believe in that living Christ who ever liveth to make intercession for us, whose presence still brings a hush and casts an awe upon our spirits. But still more we believe in that human Christ who is the eternal Son of God, who, in the nobly daring sentence, 'became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever.' His human heart still craves the love and adoration of humanity. He is still, as He was, 'the Lord, the Spirit,' to whom we can draw near in close and tender intimacy. When we realize the truth we understand that He is nearer to us even than to John who lay on His bosom, or Mary who sat at His feet. We know Him now, unprevented and unimpeded by the mortal screen, in the companionship of the spirit. In every century, in every generation, down the course of time, there are those who have come nearer to Him than His friend Lazarus. There are those who know Him more fully and more deeply than Peter, or James, or John. There are those who have entered into the riches of His grace more largely than Paul. To-day, and to all time, if they will, men may become intimates of Jesus.

¶ That heroic and saintly missionary, James Gilmour of Mongolia, was one of those whose sense of the abiding presence of Christ was always vivid and supporting. 'No one,' he writes, 'who does not go away, leaving all and going alone can feel the force of the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end

of the world," and when I begin to feel my heart threatening to go down, I betake myself to this companionship, and, thank God, I have felt the blessedness of this promise rushing over me repeatedly when I knelt down and spoke to Jesus as a present companion from whom I am sure to find sympathy.'

¶ The last hymn sung for Bishop Moule as he was dying was Christina Rossetti's,

None other Lamb, none other Name,
None other hope in heaven or earth or sea.

When supposed finally to be unconscious his daughter said quietly to him, 'The Lord Jesus is with thee.'

'I know it,' came back the reply in a firm whisper.'[1]

2. Now what are the essential notes of this intimacy?

(1) *Fellowship with Christ.*—The first and simplest is that of fellowship with Him. As that fellowship is maintained unbroken, this intimacy, by a natural law, becomes closer and more gracious. There was no breach in the fellowship of Bethany. The one incident which interrupts the sweet-toned harmony of the relationship—Christ's rebuke of Martha—reveals how deep was His concern that nothing should come in between Him and them. But the direct evidence is set in a statement which all the Evangelists repeat: 'And now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany.' He left the Temple grieved and vexed by what that piercing look round about had seen, and He went, with desire, like a hart to its water brook, to the fellowship of Bethany. Had He been met with the salutation, 'Lord, we had not expected that thou wouldst come,' a keener pain than that of the driven nails of His cross would have smitten Him. He knew, as we all know, that there was a constant subconsciousness of His presence even when He was far from them. When we are gathered in some company we are aware that one whom we know through and through, and trust in with our deepest nature, and love with all our heart, needs not to speak, needs not to act, needs not to be seen. We are conscious of his presence. We know what he is thinking. We can anticipate what he will say. We are sure that at the opportune moment he will turn to us and give us his greeting. So Martha and Mary and Lazarus maintained their constant fellowship with a steadfast loyalty, unbroken in thought as much as by word or deed. And we, if we cherish the desire, if we keep inviolate from treason our faith and love, if we render obedience in our thoughts within, and in the open ways of our feet without, shall also be numbered in Christ's fellowship, and become members of the company of His intimates.

[1] *The Life of H. C. G. Moule.*

(2) *A Deeper Knowledge of Jesus.*—A second note of intimacy is the ever-deepening knowledge of Jesus. It is not too much to say that no one, not even one of the disciples whom Christ called His friends, knew Jesus better than this household. They had no great talents with which to serve Him, but their discernment was never at fault. As the intimacy became more close and tender Jesus revealed Himself more fully, until their knowledge of Him was unerring and instinctive. That is always one of the marks of the intimates of Jesus. We grow 'in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Is He not more to us now than when we first came to Him, with thoughts so unsure and so crude about His person and His work? Has He not been showing us more of His fullness of grace and truth? If it be not so, we have not been maintaining the intimacy with Jesus.

¶ In the lower world of animal life we find that creatures can receive wonderful accessions of seeing-power. The caterpillar has a simple organ of vision only, but in the butterfly that simple organ has developed into a compound faceted eye with perhaps more than twenty thousand lenses. Are we not justified in taking this wonderful enhancement of sight in the lower stages of life as a rude prophecy of the larger virtue of vision latent in the soul, of the larger revelations of the Divine mind and purpose reserved for the eyes of angels and men?[1]

The Epistles of St Paul afford a notable example of this progress in vision and power and mystic insight. As he grew into closer intimacy with Jesus, his Epistles, in their succession, became richer with the fuller revelation of the Lord. As he writes the earliest of the Epistles, to the Thessalonians, he finds the mystery in Christ to be difficult to declare. But when, in later years, he sits down to tell out his knowledge

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

of Jesus to the Romans, or the Ephesians, or the Philippians, he soars into regions of thought where even yet we find it difficult to follow. The men and women of to-day whom we ourselves have known, often of lowly state and humble life, who have risen into new knowledge of Jesus have been His intimates. Those teachers who have opened out new aspects of the truth in Jesus, who have entered into the deeper meanings of His life, and the eternal significance of His death, have not been independent of human learning, but their insight has been baptized afresh in every hour when they have entered more fully into the secret of the Lord.

(3) *Sympathy with Christ's Passion for Souls.*—A third note of intimacy is sympathy with His passion for souls. There are some ministries of Jesus which no human soul can share. There are some sorrows into which we cannot enter. He passed into a Gethsemane into whose secret place His most loyal disciples could not enter. Yet such was Christ's need and craving for the ministry of love, that He led Peter and James and John that they might at least keep vigil with Him while He faced the drinking of the cup. When we read the words Jesus spoke when He came and found them sleeping, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' we shall find no reproach of His was so keen or so full of sadness. It was the cry of a grieved spirit which had been denied a strengthening sympathy in the deepest passion of His life. It may not be too much to say that, had Jesus taken Martha and Mary and Lazarus into the olive grove of the garden, He would have found wistful faces and sleepless eyes awaiting His return from its recesses. This at least we know, that, as He spent His last week in Jerusalem, when He rained out His heart in impassioned appeal, to be met only by the questioning and the scorn of scribe and priest, or the fruitless curiosity of the fickle people, night by night He went out to Bethany to those who could interpret His passion for souls.

To-day the intimates of Jesus are called to share in no service more fully than this. Take up the names of those who, under the influence of all the creeds and in the membership of all the communions, have shared in this passion for souls and you will find this note of intimacy. Read their journals. Begin with Paul's letters and pass right down through all the great names to the last chronicle which some dying missionary in China or Africa leaves behind him, and as you find them sighing over the open sores of humanity, and pouring out their lives like drink-offerings in the depths of their passion, they are all living in the closest intimacy of Jesus. Or, take up the record of those who cherish quenchless hopes for Christ's Kingdom, who lead men into costly philanthropies among the sick and the poor, who bind together young men and women in covenant bands of dedication after the manner of Christ, and they are all intimates of Jesus. In prayers that are never weary, in waiting that is never discouraged, in sufferings which are never murmured at, in new and daring services of which they never boast, they show their sympathy with Christ's passion for souls.

¶ I was once walking with Hugh Price Hughes along Piccadilly on the way to Holborn. He had hold of my arm, and I both heard and felt the man's intensity. I do not remember what we were talking about, but when we reached Leicester Square, and were passing the Empire Music Hall, he suddenly stopped, and, pointing to the Empire, he said, 'I must have that place for Christ. What a glorious centre for the gospel!' He lived to win souls, and his life was consecrated to one campaign.[1]

3. How do we become the intimates of Jesus?

(1) There may be lurking in some heart that deadening heresy which has held so long and so fateful a tyranny over men's minds, and has been set in that too easy rendering of a great saying, 'Many are called, but few are choice.' The suggestion is that it is not given to every one, but only to certain chosen and choice souls, to be intimates of Jesus. This heresy has been rooted in men's minds for centuries, and it has been fostered by the Romish Church, and by all in sympathy with its methods. It asserts that there is an esoteric, a deep and inward faith, and an exoteric, a common and external faith, which is all that is required of the outsider. That is to say that there must be men who shall live in a careful holiness, follow a special vocation, and enter into the mystery of Christ. But there are others who shall never be more than dwellers in the outer court, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary. So men and women, sometimes of tender spirit, compelled to live their lives in the rude and tempting world, fall back,

[1] J. H. Jowett.

in a poor content, on a low level of love and desire, and think that intimacy with Jesus is not for them. Martha and Mary and Lazarus did not leave all to follow Christ. They lived their simple, home-staying lives. They grew weary at their daily tasks. They fulfilled their course in the common courtesies of human intercourse, yet their home was monastery and convent such as Rome has never known.

(2) But the root of this failure to crave for intimacy may be deeper still. We may tell ourselves that it needs a fairer grace, and a nature cast in a finer mould, than ours. The man whose days are bound together by a natural piety may grow into a saint. But as for us with our coarse passions and our wayward past, the lowest room, the seat only within the door will serve. We fail because we have not realized that He is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless, as He fills us with all the fullness of God. It is not the quality of a man's spirit when he begins. It is what Christ can make him when he has been fully surrendered. There were many homes in Bethany, but to none of them did Jesus go but to the house of Martha. He did not choose them for anything special in them. Only for this, that Martha's door was ever open with welcome, and Mary's heart was ever eager for His word, and the eyes of Lazarus ever hungered for His face.

Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

FRUITLESSNESS

Mark xi. 14.—'And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.'

The incident from which these words are taken occurred on Monday of Passion Week. Jesus on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem felt hungry; and, seeing a fig tree in the distance with leaves on it, He approached, hoping to find fruit, but found none—'nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet.' Then He pronounced upon it this word of doom, 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever,' and presently the fig tree was seen 'dried up from the roots.'

I

Difficulties

Now this narrative has notoriously been a perplexity to faith and a handle to unbelief. It has troubled devout students of the Gospels both in ancient and in modern times. It has also 'done yeoman service in the cause of unbelief among the uneducated and the semi-educated; it still figures largely in the indictments which are preferred against the Christian faith.'[1] It may be well, therefore, in the first place, to deal with these difficulties, and clear our way to an understanding both of the true meaning of the incident and the significance of our Lord's action.

1. One difficulty, which was felt more acutely in former times, as for example by Augustine, was that here ignorance is imputed to the Son of God. 'How,' it is asked, 'should our Lord, knowing, as by His divine nature He must, that there was no fruit upon that tree, have gone to seek it there, and made to His disciples as though He expected to find it?'[1] To escape this difficulty it has been suggested that our Lord here acted a part, pretending ignorance for the spiritual good of His disciples. This would seem to make things worse rather than better. In point of fact, however, the difficulty of imputing ignorance to Jesus hardly exists for us to-day. It arose out of a false idea of what the Incarnation implies. The Gospels nowhere assert the omniscience of Jesus. On one occasion He expressly declared Himself ignorant, and in His ordinary intercourse with men we hear Him asking questions and expressing surprise in the most natural way. These things are to us a welcome evidence of the genuineness of His manhood; they are part of that Divine act of condescension by which He took upon Him our human nature with its natural limitations, though without its sin.

[1] H. Hensley Henson, *The Creed in the Pulpit*, 121.

[1] Trench, *Miracles*, 469.

2. Jesus has been charged with being unreasonable in expecting fruit from the fig tree when 'the time of figs was not yet.' A little knowledge of the habits of the fig tree may serve to dismiss this difficulty. In the spring the fruit-bud forms before the leaf, so that if a fig tree is seen in full leaf it is a reasonable expectation that there will be fruit on it. Indeed, if there is not, then it means that for that season at least it will be barren. In this instance it was early in the season—'the time of figs was not yet'—but for some reason, perhaps because it grew in a specially favourable spot, this tree gave special promise of fruit, only to disappoint.

3. A much more serious objection is that Our Lord here showed petulance or spitefulness in cursing the fig tree. The charge has been made times without number and continues to be confidently repeated, so we must pause to consider it, though the natural impulse of the Christian mind is to pass it by as beneath contempt. For what does the charge amount to? In plain terms it amounts to this, that the Lord Jesus Christ was capable of behaving like a spoiled child, that whips the table it has bumped against. And that, too, in Passion Week. We feel instinctively that the charge is monstrous. We remember how our Lord, after forty days of fasting in the wilderness, refused to satisfy His hunger by turning the stones into bread, as by His divine power He might have done. We remember how, as He sat weary and hungry and thirsty by Jacob's well, waiting for the return of His disciples who had gone to buy food, He became so absorbed in spiritual things that He forgot His hunger, and when the disciples entreated Him, saying, 'Master, eat,' He put them aside, saying, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' Unable to understand this elevation of soul over body, the disciples could only whisper among themselves, 'Hath any man brought him ought to eat?' And now the suggestion is actually made that in the last great week of His life, with the Cross full in view, when, as Bengel says, *habitabat in passione*, He was capable of an outbreak of childish spite against a tree. Feeling the utter impossibility of such a thing, some have preferred to regard the whole incident as unhistorical. It does not seem necessary, however, to resort to so desperate an expedient. For we shall find, when we come to the exposition of the story, that physical hunger was forgotten in spiritual concern, that while our Lord spoke to the tree He thought of the nation, and that His mood was not one of petulance but of Divine sorrow.

4. Before coming to that, however, there is another difficulty requiring to be dealt with. An outcry has been made about the injustice of blasting a poor irresponsible tree. 'The cursing of the fruitless fig tree shocks us' is the verdict of one commentator, and many have echoed his indignant protest. A similar protest, as is well known, has often been made against the fate of the herd of swine which ran down a steep place into the sea. Such protests would seem to arise from an excessive degree of sentiment or from an undue desire to find fault. Assuming that the lower creatures exist for man's use—and we all act upon that assumption every day—then wherein does the injustice lie? If the whole herd of swine had been killed to fill man's belly nobody would object. Turn them into sausages and how excellently they fulfil their destiny! But sacrifice them for the salvation of a man's soul, use them up in order to aid a demented being to struggle back to the light of reason, and how very shocking that is! So here, if it had been said, 'This fig tree continues barren and useless, cut it down and make firewood of it,' no fault would have been found. But, when the Son of God withers the tree by His word of power, to teach impressively the doom of fruitlessness, then there is an outcry.

But wherein does the injustice lie? Was the tree not put to good use? It needs but little imagination to conceive this tree as having been more serviceable to man than any other fig tree that ever grew. How many careless souls have been arrested as they saw its gaunt and withered branches against the sky. To go no farther back than the revivals of last century, think with what powerful effect that simple hymn was sung,

'Nothing but leaves! Nothing but leaves!'

And its solemn ministry of warning is not yet fulfilled. Who knows what impression it may once again make as we fix our thoughts upon it? And if even one soul should be arrested and brought to feel the seriousness of life, who shall dare to say that the fig tree was withered

in vain? May the spirit of God graciously use it to this high end!

II

A Tragic Sequel

The cursing of the fig tree is to be regarded as the tragic sequel to the parable of the Barren Fig Tree. In that parable our Lord told of how a man planted a fig tree in his vineyard and gave it every attention, but in vain. It still continued fruitless. Then he said, 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground!' But the gardener pleaded for one other year of grace, after which, if it still continued fruitless, it must be cut down. This parable was aimed at the Jewish people. They were God's fig tree, which He had planted and cultivated, and from which He had long looked for fruit. But they had continued fruitless, until now at length the Divine patience was almost exhausted. In the parable Jesus solemnly admonished them that they could not be tolerated much longer. Unless there came some change for the better, they must be cast out as useless. After this they were, as we should say, 'on their last warning.'

Such was the meaning and aim of the parable, and such was the situation resulting from it. As we know, it was spoken in vain. The year had elapsed and the inevitable end was near. The Jews had rejected their Messiah, and nothing now could avert their doom. Even as He rode into Jerusalem, amid the hosannas of the multitude, He had this sad prospect clearly in view, and He wept in hopeless sorrow over the city. 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.' Now it was the very next day, and near the very same spot, that our Lord came upon the barren fig tree and suddenly saw in it a perfect picture of the spiritual situation which was absorbing His mind. Here was early leafage, giving promise of unusually early fruit, only to reveal on closer inspection utter fruitlessness, and so He was moved to pronounce its doom. When one realizes the situation in its historic setting, and tries to enter sympathetically into the thoughts and feelings which absorbed the Saviour's mind, then we shall surely feel that here there was no remembrance of mere physical hunger, here there was no room for fretfulness or petulance, but only for a deep and Divine sorrow over the doom of a fruitless nation, and of all unfruitful souls.

III

Culture and Fruit

The aim of all culture is fruit-bearing. As in the natural world, so is it in the spiritual world. The Jews of old were the subjects of a Divine culture in an especial degree. They were a kind of seed-plot, carefully fenced in and separated from the wilderness of a heathen world. By the Law and the Prophets their moral life was nourished as that of no other nation was. And in all this the Divine intention was, not to make favourites of them, but to make them a blessing to all mankind. This was pointed at from the first, in the promise given to Abraham the father of the nation, that 'in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Some such result as that was called for to justify all the care bestowed on Israel, and manifest in all God's merciful dealings with that highly favoured people. When we survey their history, or read such a summary of it as is contained in Ezra's prayer, when we think of the repeated deliverances, of the mighty acts of salvation, of the wonderful truths revealed, of the unnumbered mercies, of all the loving-kindness and forbearance of God, then we are ready to say, 'What fruit may be expected from all this—what rich fruits of upright and holy living, of devoted service, of love to God and all mankind. And if Israel fail, how great their guilt!'

Not of the Jews alone, but of all men may such things be said. What amazing culture has gone to the making of a man! And how wonderful is the product! If the hand of God be traced in the evolution of our human race, what a record it becomes of Divine patience and care. Having laid the foundations in the first faint beginnings of life, God has nourished and directed, conserved and eliminated, until at last the full stature of manhood was attained. Is it for nothing that God waited and worked so long till there should in due course be formed a man, gifted with reason and moral feeling, and richly endowed in body and mind and

spirit? We cannot but think that God has some great end in view, not merely for the race but for every single individual—something to justify the long and painful process of his evolution, something to make it worth while. Every man in receiving the gift of his manhood becomes the object of a Divine expectancy. It is expected of him not merely that he shall live but that he shall live worthily, that he shall fulfil the high end God had in view in making him a man.

Especially is this true of us who are the product of centuries of Christian culture. The peculiar care lavished upon the Jews of old is far surpassed by the privileges we enjoy. We live in the full light of the gospel of Christ, the meaning of God's ways has been made clear. We are bathed in the sunshine of God's love, of which the supreme proof has been given at Calvary. We know ourselves to be the objects not only of a providential care but of a Divine redemption. Surely, then, the fruit of all this will justly be looked for, fruit to repay, if that were possible, the Divine culture, fruit in which the Saviour may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. 'The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth,' and the supreme question for every one of us is whether we are bringing forth such fruits to the glory of God.

From the story of the fig tree a somewhat erroneous impression is at times taken of what fruitlessness really is. The contrast between leaves and fruit naturally suggests the contrast between profession and practice, appearance and reality. Accordingly, the fruitlessness for which the fig tree was cursed is sometimes interpreted as hypocrisy or empty show in religion. This, of course, fits in well with the case of the Pharisees, whose hypocrisy our Lord unsparingly denounced. But fruitlessness may be taken to cover all selfish living. The fig tree was cultivated to bear fruit, but, instead, it used up all its sap and strength to clothe and enrich and beautify itself. It tried to conserve its life, and thereby doomed itself to sterility. It is a perfect picture of the self-centred life, of all whose powers and activities are governed by self-interest. And who is there among us all but must plead guilty to this great sin, of having taken the good gifts of God and applied them to our own selfish uses without regard to the will of the Giver?

IV

The Curse on Fruitlessness

A curse fell on the barren fig tree, and no wonder! For if anything does not fulfil the purpose of its existence, what wonder if at last it is scrapped? Now there are abundant and most solemn warnings in the Word of God that so will the Creator deal with His creatures who perversely refuse to fulfil the purpose for which they were created. It is no more than one would expect, and surely cannot be held to involve injustice. Yet it is a prospect which in our time is widely and persistently disbelieved. In spite of the fate which befel the Jewish nation, in spite of all the warnings of history and the teachings of Scripture, it is confidently assumed that God can never possibly so deal with any of His creatures. 'No one is afraid of God now,' Dr Dale remarked on one occasion to a friend. And, alas, it is all too true. Men seem to have attained a comfortable sense, not of the love, but of the stolid good-nature of God. The apostle calls us to 'behold the goodness and severity of God,' but many seem incapable of holding the two sides of the truth in unity. It may be that our fathers tended to emphasize unduly the severity of God, and to drive men to repentance under the lash of a slavish fear. And this may have provoked a natural reaction. But now the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, the severity of God is quite forgotten and nothing remains in men's thought of Him but an easy indulgent Fatherhood.

It would seem, therefore, opportune to reaffirm strongly and to preach with all vigour the fear of God. 'We are blind to whole tracts of New Testament teaching if we ignore the fact that Christ is Judge as well as Saviour. He does not bear the sword in vain. We are not exalting Christ, we are doing a grave wrong to men, if we induce them to believe that Jesus is mere indulgent good-nature, and that He can view sin and wrong with easy indifference. And I am not sure that our over-emphasis on the gentleness and kindness of Jesus has not already inflicted that grave wrong upon men.'[1] It is a profound and fatal error to pass lightly over all the Scriptural warnings of judgment, and to dissociate them from the gospel as if somehow

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, 74.

they had ceased to be relevant and had been done away in Christ. No apostle or prophet, not John the Baptist himself, has spoken more solemnly than Jesus has of the curse of God that falls on the fruitless. When He was sending His apostles into a heathen world and would arm them against the fury of their persecutors, He set the fear of God before their eyes. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matt. x. 28).

It is true, the doom of the fruitless is veiled in gloom, even as the future of the redeemed is veiled in glory. But it is sufficiently hinted at in vague and awful imagery. It is as the withering up of a tree, the burning of a dead branch, the consuming of refuse by fire and hideous crawling corruption. It is a realm of outer darkness, of bitter pain and lamentation and spiritual death. These are images from which our minds recoil with horror. What they represent it is impossible for us to conceive. But if God is the light of every living soul, if it be true, as we sing, that

Every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone,

then, what is left of a soul from which God has withdrawn His spirit? There would remain nothing of light and beauty, nothing of happiness and love, but only darkness and an utter vacancy of good. In the council chamber of the Palace of the Doges of Venice the portraits of all the rulers of the city are painted round the walls. But one compartment is vacant and painted black. On the blank space there is this inscription in Latin, 'Here is the place of Marini Faliero, beheaded for his crimes.' He was unworthy and he was painted out. Nothing remains but the blackness which marks his place. Who shall say what it will mean to be blotted out of God's picture, condemned as fruitless and finally cast away? Thank God, the word has not yet gone forth against any of us. We are still spared, and the Heavenly Husbandman has still some hope of us. We may even yet, however barren our lives have hitherto been, bring forth fruit unto God, the end everlasting life. Let us, therefore, pray to the All Merciful One that He would graciously quicken us into newness of life.

Thou didst hang upon a barren tree,
My God, for me:
Though I till now be barren, now at length,
Lord, give me strength,
To bring forth fruit to Thee.[1]

J. H. Morrison.

The Cleansing of the Temple

Mark xi. 15-17.—'And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.'

The triumphal entry was over and our Lord had made His public proclamation of Messiahship; and now, in His various occupations, He was carrying out His rôle: His proclamation of Himself was being at point after point illustrated and confirmed.

1. With a heart deeply stirred by His own complete self-commitment, Jesus came into the Temple. What was it that He saw there when He looked round about upon all things? To put it in a word, He saw the Temple desecrated. There were men haggling, cheating and overreaching one another in the very house of God. We must remember, of course, that all the buying and selling that went on was with a view to the requirements of the Temple worship. Jews came up to worship at the Temple from all parts of Palestine, from all parts of the world, and it would have been impossible to bring their sacrifices with them. So, to meet their convenience, arrangements were made whereby the pilgrims could purchase in Jerusalem the lambs they needed. It was the same with the money-changing. Jews coming from foreign countries would naturally be provided with the money of those countries. And the Temple tax had to be paid in Jewish coin. Further, we are not to think of this traffic as taking place in the shrine itself. Around the

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

Temple there were a series of courts, and the largest and the outermost of these was the Court of the Gentiles. It was in this great Court of the Gentiles that the buying and selling took place. The Jew scarcely, perhaps, reckoned this court as a holy place. It was almost a profane place, for the uncircumcised Gentile could enter into it.

None the less, such a commercial invasion of the Temple courts by these bargaining hucksters was grossly irregular. The practice had crept in through the influence of the sons of Annas, and had been condoned on plausible grounds for over a generation. It was a 'distinct convenience'! Many wrongs are tolerated in that name. Besides, it had now been permitted for so many years that it seemed almost a tradition of the Fathers. Convenience and custom, an alliance that has broken the back of most reformers!

It was not the mere buying and selling and money-changing that desecrated the Temple. If the motive of these actions had been a genuine desire to meet the convenience of the pilgrims, and to minister to their necessities, our Lord would not have blazed up in holy anger against it, nor would He have accused those who engaged in it of turning His Father's House into a den of robbers. Originally instituted to meet the convenience of the pilgrims, it was carried on from motives of cupidity and greed. The priests who permitted the traffic no longer thought of the pilgrims and their needs; they thought only of their own gains. The sale of animals for sacrifice became a source of profit. The exchange of money became an opportunity for extorting an oppressive discount. The sordid, mercenary spirit of the priests turned everything to 'desecration, profanity, greed and fraud,' and it was this spirit that stirred our Lord to indignation. They brought the spirit of the world in its basest and foulest form right into the Holy Place. This it was that defiled the Temple. They were guilty of cheating and defrauding and oppression in the name of religion. Literally, they turned the house of prayer into 'a den of robbers.'[1]

2. We shall be mistaken if we think of the cleansing of the Temple merely as the result of a sudden impulse of righteous indignation. No doubt, in His frequent visits during the past years, Jesus had been roused to anger and loathing by the sight of the traders and money-changers who crowded the court of the Temple with their booths and tables. And what He did we know—an act so daring and dramatic, that it fanned the smouldering opposition of the priests into a flame. His passion for the purity of God—for the purity of the worship which prophets had died for and which smug priests were now defiling—made Him terrible with that selfless wrath which can leap like devastating lightning. He took a few small cords and knotted them together. He opened the doors of the stalls where the oxen and sheep were penned, and they poured out. Then He turned towards the tables of the money-changers. They scattered before Him, and the money of the overturned tables went rolling after them along the Temple floor. He stood alone in the midst of the suddenly emptied court, where the crowd of amazed and awe-struck people gazed at Him from the watching circle to which they had pushed back.

¶ As we passed out through Solomon's Porch, thousands of fanatical religionists were pouring in to prayer. Some still looked askance and bitterly at the infidel walking in their sacred place. The sight of that crowd made one realize the marvellous courage of a lonely Galilean Carpenter, who dared single-handed to upset the tables of the money-changers of the great men of the city and equally fanatical religionists of His day, and calmly to take the consequences. That courage, at least, no man has ever improved upon.[1]

That curious formalism by which Christian art has so long depicted a kind of over-borne, anæmic Jesus forgot that scene in the Temple. The moral majesty of Jesus could be an appalling thing. The trivial cords in His hand were nothing; it was the look in His eyes, and the authority of His gesture, before which the traders and the money-changers shrank dismayed. Anger in a little man is like a flurry of wind, before which others may give way for a moment as waters give way, only to come flooding back in a more angry sea. The greater the man, the deeper and more silent is the movement of his emotion. With such a one as Jesus, His anger must have been of an awful quietness. Men watch it as they watch an eclipse, scarcely breathing, seized with a dread-

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel According to St Mark.*

[1] Sir W. T. Grenfell, *Labrador Looks at the Orient*, 76.

ful sense as though their earth were falling into night.[1]

3. What an illustration we have here of the moral authority of the Lord Jesus Christ! He was only one man. There were scores of traffickers and money-changers. And yet before this one man unarmed this mob of men fled in something like abject panic. Jesus was vested with no external authority. He wore no badge of office. How came these men to flee from before Him? There was a double reason.

This is the first: sin is always weakness. Men who know they are in the wrong often show themselves timid in the face of righteousness. 'Conscience doth make cowards of us all.' These men knew they were doing a wrong, an indefensible thing. And so, when Jesus challenged them, not a man dare stand his ground. But this is more than an illustration of the weakness of evil—it is also an illustration of the moral authority of Jesus. There was a purity and holiness in His very presence before which evil could not stand. 'Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?' the prophet asks. Not these traffickers and money-changers, caught in the very act of desecrating God's house. They fled before Him, conscience-stricken and ashamed.

Our Lord was the Prince of Peace and the Prince of Peacemakers; but He was not a pacifist in the sense that He was willing to let evil have a quiet life and an unopposed triumph. So far as personal wrongs went, He was willing to carry out His own counsel of 'the other cheek' and to give His cheek to the smiter. But so far as public justice is concerned, or the claim of His Father's righteousness, that Reforming Christ with uplifted scourge is anything but a lesson in Quietism. He knows how to take measures to carry out what is right, active even to the point of aggression. And there are occasions when His disciples have to follow Him.[2]

¶ Stopford Brooke writes of Frederick Robertson: 'With those who were weak, crushed with remorse, fallen, his compassion, long-suffering, and tenderness were as beautiful as they were unfailing. But falsehood, hypocrisy, the sin of the strong against the weak, stirred him to the very depths of his being. "I have seen him," writes one of his friends, "grind his teeth and clench his fists when passing a man who, he knew, was bent on destroying an innocent girl." "My blood," he writes himself, after a conversation on the wrongs of women, "was running liquid fire."'

4. The cleansing was followed by teaching. Jesus reminds His listeners of a forgotten saying: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' The House of God is to be a house of prayer where God asks to be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth.' We should never think of setting up a market within sacred precincts, but, like the Pharisees in Jerusalem, we may profane the Holy Place. When we sit in church, and allow our minds to busy themselves with worldly affairs; when we bring pride, and jealousy, and uncharitableness with us; when we allow base and foul thoughts to go coursing through our minds, we are as really polluting God's house as were those traffickers who chaffered and haggled in the Temple precincts. There is one prayer we may well offer whenever we come to God's house, and that is, 'O God! make clean our hearts within us,' for holiness becometh God's House for ever.

Have Faith in God

Mark xi. 22.—'And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.'

THERE was a time when the human heart had lost its faith, when those on board the ship of life had grown afraid of their awful surroundings, when the great sea of eternity troubled the hearts of men and depressed their natural energy, and God sent into our midst One to save the human family from despair. Jesus Christ came into this world to help men to believe in God, and to live in the confidence and strength and final peace of such a faith.

Consider man's need of faith in God, and Christ's fitness and authority for urging such a faith upon us all.

1. *Man's Need of Faith.*—The condition of mankind in general before Christ came was just the condition of heart and mind in which any one would be to-day were he to look out upon

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Master*, 280. [2] J. M. E. Ross.

the human scene and in upon himself without any faith in God. The world had reached that stage in its history when, if the human soul had not been taken hold of and reinforced, it would have lost its ambition and given way to despair —and to the sins of despair. The world had reached that very point in its history to which every thinking person comes sooner or later. This is how we reach it.

It is the natural instinct of a child to believe. The ideas of God and of heaven are very real to children. They believe naturally and unconsciously: 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy.' And so, when Jesus wished to show men what faith was, and to show the Pharisees that their sourness and suspicion were not faith, He took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot see the kingdom of God.' Jesus said, to have faith is to have the unquestioning outlook of children. But of course we cannot remain in the natural state of children. The growing child passes on, and the shadows of experience begin to fall upon him. He meets the world. There he learns that he cannot get many things he wants. He meets opposition and the overthrow of many of his plans. He begins to feel that life is a complicated business which must be explained on some level deeper than the surface. He has lost the sweet feeling of his childhood, that life is a small and manageable matter, and that things happen always just as they ought to happen in a beautiful story. Soon he mixes with life, and looks upon it with the eyes and with the knowledge of a man. The thought may come to him that this world is not altogether in the hands of God. There are good people and good institutions; but there are also bad people and bad institutions. Part of the world is apparently in the hands of God; but part of it undoubtedly is in other hands. There is a good spirit and there is an evil spirit.

And then the question arises, Which of these two seems to be gaining the victory? What reason is there for thinking that good is really stronger than evil? Do not bad people seem to get on? Why, if God is there, does He not strike them to the earth with a blow? And so, on and on, the problems of human life begin to make their assaults upon the repose of his childhood. Now it is at this stage in our life that we stand in need of some one who, by his word, by his authority, can give our soul a push over the line, adding that something to us which in moments of personal choice makes all the difference between believing and denying. This is the stage of our life when we must have the faith of our childhood defended and reinforced, the faith, namely, that this is God's world, and that we are here not simply to pass the time, but to fight for a Cause and to keep a Flag from trailing in the mire.

Now, we read that Jesus Christ came in the fullness of the times. He came, as we say, in time, at the very moment. He came just in time to catch the soul of man at that perilous point in his history. A profound melancholy had settled down upon the spirits of all serious people. Nothing seemed worth living for. The highest teaching of the day declared that life was a useless burden. Some were even beginning to ask themselves and to ask one another whether they needed to endure the miserable doom of life, whether they needed to go on and on through a dreary desert of days only to die by the way and be covered in the sand. And so men began to lay violent hands upon themselves; and those who did so were the wise and the rich and the good. As for the others—the aged, the sick, the defeated, the broken in spirit—what heart can they have had to endure their mean, monotonous days?

Such was the condition of the world when Jesus came. It is the condition of the world still wherever He is not. The human soul lay dying of an inner distaste for life, dying for want of air, that is to say, for want of God—when Jesus met it on its way, even as He met the bier on which lay the body of the widow's son of Nain, and whispered, 'Have faith in God,' and the dead arose.

It would be difficult to trace to all its sources that weariness of spirit, that moral impotence which from time to time falls upon the spirit of man. We do know, however, that sin, personal moral failure, has always this effect —it deepens and seems to confirm the natural darkness of this world. We know how a life of sin, a life of constant acquiescence in the seductions of the world, a life without protest, without any recovery of itself in God, begins to see all life as being in its own condition—without order, without moral meaning, without God. But, even apart from that tendency towards dullness and misery and death which

is one of the consequences of living against God or without God, the human soul had begun to fall back, had begun to give up the fight before the face of life when the Lord Jesus came upon the scene. And those facts of life, of Nature, of history, of personal experience, those facts which wore down the spirit of man two thousand years ago, are still here, are still before us, and soon or late will wear down our strength, our energy, our zest for the severe and happy way of life unless we, in our day, drink anew of that spiritual Rock which has followed us, which Rock is Christ.

¶ The Sadhu Sundar Singh says this: 'Christ is my Saviour; He is my guide; He is everything to me in heaven and earth. Once when travelling in a sandy region I was tired and thirsty, and, standing on the top of a mount, I looked for water. The sight of a lake in the distance brought joy to me, for now I hoped to quench my thirst. I walked toward it for a long time, but I could never reach it; afterwards I found that it was a mirage. In a like manner I was moving about the world in search of the water of life. The things of this world, wealth, position, honour and luxury, looked like a lake by drinking of whose waters I hoped to quench my spiritual thirst, but I never found a drop of the water to quench the thirst of my heart. I was dying of thirst when my spiritual eyes were opened. I saw the rivers of living water flowing from the pierced side. I drank of them and was satisfied. Thirst was no more. Ever since I have always drunk of that water of life; I have never been thirsty in the sandy desert of this world since; my heart is full of praise.'

2. *Christ's Authority for urging Faith in God.*—And now let us ask what authority Jesus claims for urging upon men His faith in God. It might be enough to say that Jesus Christ, being who He is, is not to be questioned but simply to be obeyed. And yet it was never our Lord's way to thrust His authority upon us. He rather *persuades* us to put our trust in Him. Before any one has the right or the power to bid us 'have faith in God,' that one must have two qualifications. For one thing, he must know God, and for another thing, he must have gone through the very darkness which he is asking us to meet in faith. But surely these are conditions which Jesus our Saviour abundantly fulfils. He has surely won the right to speak to us about God. He has gone before us through life and death. He bids men believe in God, and He speaks not from the throne but from the Cross. Not from any easy place far removed from our sorrow did Jesus bid us have faith in God; but from beneath His own great burden, in His days of loneliness and of suffering, from the Garden where His soul was heavy with a sorrow so great that none of us is good enough to feel all the loneliness of it. This, rightly considered, is our blessed Lord's authority, this is His crown—His experience, His solitude, His suffering for the true faith in God. He trod the loneliest passages of human grief, and at every stage He found God near. It is this God in whom we are to put our trust. It is not in God as we might with difficulty see glimpses of His nature in the physical world or in history that we are to put our trust. It is in the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Have faith in God. Yes; faith is a call. It is an appeal, not an argument or a conclusion. It is an appeal which Jesus Christ has won the right to make by reason of His victory of faith—an appeal to us to take our stand in this world with Him.

The Omnipotence of Faith

Mark xi. 22, 23.—'And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.'

The faith which Jesus said men must have before they could do apparently impossible things was faith in God. He had been speaking to His discouraged disciples about faith and what faith can do in the way of overcoming and removing hindrances. To add emphasis to what He had been saying He pointed to the hill on which the Temple stood, and assured them that if only they had faith enough they could remove that mountain—break down, that is, the spiritual tyranny of which it was the visible sign and symbol; free their own souls and the souls of the people from the influence of the system which had made Jerusalem a city of bondage to her children. It was a work which

must have appeared impossible, beyond all human ingenuity and power: and with man unrelated and alone it was impossible, but not with God—for all things are possible with God; that is, to man with God, working in the line of God's will and strengthened by His Spirit.

1. There is hardly a simpler word in the language than faith, and we are seldom at any loss in understanding its meaning when it occurs in any speech or writing on common themes. But probably not another of the great words of religion has been so misused, and about none is there such diversity of opinion. We constantly hear it used for such distinct things as the faculty of spiritual perception, and the objects perceived by that faculty; for confidence in a person or principle, and for a creed—as when we say 'This is the Catholic faith.' To many it is simply a technical term—the symbol of a theological virtue; and by others it is translated into a demand for a mystical piety—the personal assurance of salvation. It has also been often employed as if it were synonymous with credulity, or an act of submission to authority; and again and again has it been used to rally a crusade against intellect. Even in the New Testament we cannot be always sure of the meaning of faith without reference to the context or circumstances. We who inherit the Protestant tradition are much inclined to read the words 'Have faith in God' in the light of St Paul's teaching. But in the use of Jesus faith is a much simpler and more practical quality.

Faith in the thought and teaching of Jesus is essentially an act of the will—a moral quality whose opposite is inability to do and to dare, disobedience due to weakness or wilfulness, disloyalty. It is loyalty to the will of God—loyalty to the best we see and know—coupled with the conviction that, in spite of all apparent difficulty, delay, and defeat, God's best, which includes our human best, is advancing to power and glory. Mere belief in God, in His might and goodness, is not faith according to our Master's idea of faith. He never gave the name of faith to a belief on which there was no courage to adventure. When he exhorted His disciples to have faith in God He was asking them not merely to believe on God, but to act on their belief. There can be no reality in a belief that is not acted upon, not lived by. It is not enough that we assent and approve; the vital thing is the will to respond. Without this direct moral influence on the life we may have a creed—certain statements about God which we have accepted—but hardly anything which Jesus would have called faith. Faith is belief put into the will and passing into purpose and action. It is the giving up of one's self to do the will of God—the obedience of the life.

It was the whole-hearted, persistent committal of themselves to the will of God which Jesus asked from the men around Him when He asked for faith in God. They were, though religious, living a poor, broken, compromising life. They hoped for the Divine kingdom of their prophets' visions and prayers, but their eyes were also fixed on the glittering seductions of worldly and selfish ambition. They tried to serve two masters, to divide their allegiance between God and a world at war with the will of God. The call of Jesus was: 'Have faith in God! Let one great principle, one great affection, one great purpose, have full control of your life. Let the will of God be your one allegiance!' It was this utter singleness of motive and service, this surrender to the absolutely true and right, which Jesus called faith in God and to which He committed Himself and His cause.

2. Have faith in God! How few of us have any real faith in God. We are troubled, distracted, confused, just for want of this faith—this entire committal of ourselves to what we plainly see to be the will of God. We act as if the world were not God's world but a divided empire, as if there were more gods than one to be worshipped and served. What is the temptation to say what others say, and to do what others do? What is it to sacrifice some lofty ideal of duty for the sake of a mean success, or for comfort and peace? What is the meaning of our want of confidence in what is right in many of our dealings with our fellows, and of our confidence in our own smartness, and shrewdness, and in the maxims of a worldly society? What is it when a great principle or great cause is at stake and everything should be risked in its behalf, to hesitate, to think of compromise, to turn about for some expedient by which we may escape from the call of duty? Is not that living and acting as if the world were not God's

world throughout, but a divided empire? We do not live honest, straightforward, and consistent lives, because we do not realize that there is no other god but the one living and true God; that His will, and not our own comfort and gratification, is the one and only thing we are to seek to do, leaving the other things to arrange themselves around this central and supreme thing.

¶ In one of his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, Froude divides men into two great classes. On the one side there are the men who have no commanding convictions concerning duty and who guide their lives by what is pleasant or profitable. On the other side there are the men of faith—men who believe strongly in truth, justice and goodness, and cleave to them passionately. At all hazards, and in spite of all immediate consequences to themselves, they prefer and follow the right without hesitation when once it is discerned. Men of faith are, as Froude says, men who do not care to succeed anywhere or in anything if they cannot succeed nobly; men who have but one fear—the fear of doing the wrong thing and taking the wrong side.

¶ Let us not be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end do our duty as we understand it.[1]

Our Lord's exclamation of surprise—'How is it that ye have no faith?'—is just as applicable now as it was then. The same causes are in operation producing the same effects. Want of confidence in what is best and of the determination to carry it through at whatever cost are common faults. He who knew by a Divine insight what was in man would trace the state of social, political, and commercial morality, the weakness of the Church and the slow progress of true religion in our land, to the want of courage which springs from want of faith in God. It is not by conforming to the world that the world is best helped. The God of truth and holiness will not be served by what is not utterly true and clean and good. More faith in God, and less in policy and expedient, would show a higher wisdom and nobler courage, and in the end finer and more abiding results.

[1] Abraham Lincoln.

3. In this great saying we get a glimpse of the sublime courage which possessed the soul of Jesus, the courage of one who meant to make war against the evil of a nation and a world; who could view defeat as victory and death as a positive step in His progressive work. Give it a moral interpretation, and who will say that this bold utterance of the Master of all moral attainment is hyperbole? It may not be true to describe a particular thing as wrong or as right; but there is brave truth in saying that whatever is wrong can be overthrown, and whatever is right can be brought to pass. The faith which removes mountains is always allied with the finest elements of true manhood. It is fearless, but it is not the fearlessness of stupidity or fanaticism or presumption, but of an enlightened and pure moral enthusiasm which practically brings all that is within a man to one fixed purpose and course of action. It is not afraid of difficulty. It never knows when it is beaten. It falls to rise. It loves sympathy, but it can stand and fight alone rather than yield one inch to falsehood and wrong.

Virgil said of the winning crew in his famous boat-race, 'They can, because they believe they can!' The trouble with many of us is that we do not fully believe that we can do what we are bidden do by the All-wise Master of our life. We are more or less ignorant of our own power—of the hidden spiritual forces of our own nature. In the disciples we see what faith in God could do for average men, dull in mind, timid in spirit, weak in will. The whole-hearted committal of themselves to the work of God made them conscious of undreamt-of power, and made them capable of achieving what they never thought possible; changed them from ordinary and commonplace men into heroes and martyrs whom we remember for ever.

¶ 'Give me twelve men,' cried Ignatius Loyola, 'who are wholly surrendered to God, and I will convert the world with them. Very few men understand what God could do with them if they would yield themselves entirely to Him.'

If men would only do in the moral what they do in the material sphere, trust moral laws and forces as they trust physical laws and forces, they would see how perfectly true to fact is the promise of our Lord. In the material sphere of his life nothing seems impossible to man; he knows so much about material laws

that he has a certain quiet, unshakable confidence that none of his work will be in vain. He crosses continents as though they were counties, and oceans as though they were rivers; he levels mountains, annihilates space, and brings the ends of the earth together for mutual fellowship and service. But it is not only over physical forces—forces of wind and wave, of earth and air—man has power and dominion. In these moral lives which we are living we can join ourselves to the spiritual forces of the universe. The elemental powers of truth and right and love await to serve us, and they have never yet been known to fail. We may go forward with as sure a confidence in moral effort as we have in physical effort. There is but one way of success in things material and moral alike—it is the way of obedience.

Let us then have this faith in God—this confidence that truth and righteousness, goodness and love, are of God and therefore must be obeyed, lived for, laboured for, suffered for, and that, however they may be thwarted and defeated for a time, they must ultimately prevail and be established upon the earth.

¶ It is told of a famous musician that he was once spending a few days with a friend in England, who took him to a church on Sunday where he listened to a little sermon on a little theme. The next Sunday the friend invited the musician to go again to church. 'I will,' said Rubinstein, 'but on one condition: you must take me to hear a man who will tempt me to do the impossible.'

¶ In a part of the battle of Neuve Chapelle where things were more than usually muddled, a British subaltern received the order to lead his men out against the trenches opposite. The barbed wire in front of them was obviously intact, and to do anything of the sort seemed to be merely useless suicide. The men, realizing the situation, refused, and were in fact justified by a counter-order a few minutes later. But their officer could not understand their refusal. Again and again he implored them to follow him, and at last, with tears in his eyes, sprang up himself, saying, 'If you will not follow me, I'm going alone.' He was hardly over the parapet before he fell back, severely wounded. As they carried him off on a stretcher, he was weeping bitterly—not for his own failure or the pain of his wound, but because his men had disgraced themselves by refusing the impossible. That is the only right spirit for the Christian to-day—the spirit which is prepared to attempt the impossible, because the alternative is more unbearable still. But, if the faith of a Christian is not a delusion the whole way through, then for him the impossible does not exist. The Commander he serves under never blunders, and there is no such thing as going forward alone. On the contrary, the faith which is willing to face the impossible is itself the appointed means of achieving it. 'This is the victory which has overcome the world, even our faith.' 'Nothing shall be impossible unto you.'[1]

Passionately fierce the voice of God is pleading,
Pleading with men to arm them for the fight.
See how these Hands, majestically bleeding,
Call us to rout the armies of the night!
Not to the work of sordid, selfish saving
Of our own souls, to dwell with Him on high,
But to the soldier's splendid, selfless braving,
Eager to fight for righteousness, and die.

Bread of Thy Body, give me for my fighting!
Give me to drink Thy sacred Blood for wine!
While there are wrongs that need me for the righting,
While there is warfare, splendid and divine.

Pre-answered Prayer

Mark xi. 24.—'Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'

Of all the illuminating sayings of Jesus on the subject of prayer this is, perhaps, the most uncompromising and impressive. What can it mean to say that when we pray we are to believe that we have already received what we desire? How can we believe any such thing? Perhaps a brief examination of the context may help us a little in getting at the heart of this question.

After the Cleansing of the Temple Jesus had gone out to Bethany, and it was when on the road to the city on the following morning that the disciples noticed the death of the fig-tree. When they spoke about it Jesus called their attention to what they had seen in Jerusalem the day before. The Evangelist has not told us everything, but the Master must have made

[1] E. A. Burroughs, *The Valley of Decision*, 363.

them see the issue very clearly. The old religion is dying, He said; it bears nothing but leaves. The spiritual witness of Israel to the world can no longer be through the Temple and the official priesthood. There must be a new and living Temple, and a worthier and more spiritual priesthood. This little group of Galilean fishermen was the foundation of the new Temple. These men were the spiritual priesthood, the light-bearers of the world. Was it not a sublime conception? All the pomp and splendour, all the paraphernalia of external authority, backed by a venerable tradition, and an assumption of superior sanctity, was with the priest and the Pharisee; on the other side was nothing but a tiny company of simple peasants. But they were real; the others were a sham. They might have many things to suffer, but that for which they stood could not possibly be overthrown without dethroning God Himself. Hence the exhortation of Jesus to them was something like this: Have faith in God. There is a mountain of ignorance and prejudice to remove, but it can be done. Your work lies clear before you, and you need no endowment save the Spirit of God. What you have to do is to reveal to the world the eternally real which is the love of God. You will have to bear witness against all sham and corruption, but do not fear for the result. You cannot create anything, and do not need to do so; all you have to do is to let the truth of God shine through you to the world and become its own justification.

1. We see now what Jesus meant by the saying which forms our text, and its force is all the greater when we realize a little of the circumstances which made Him utter it. These men were His hope for the future. He Himself would have to die; so might they; but that for which they stood could never die, for it was eternal. No truth could be declared to the world which was not already present in the mind and heart of God; sin and folly might obscure it, but they could not change or destroy it; it was invincible as God Himself. The prayer of faith can bring that reality into manifestation, but it cannot create it, and does not need to create it; it is always here. Any prayer that was ever worth the praying has been a prayer for something which is already ours. Far beyond what mind can conceive, or heart desire, are the treasures of God waiting for the hand of faith to draw them forth, and loyal souls to live them to the world. There is something magnificently inspiring about this truth if we can only get hold of it. It will show us the secret of spiritual power; and it will make us a living force for good in the world of men and things.

There are some who are not conscious that they ever pray at all. There are others to whom prayer is a duty, more or less perfunctorily performed. Others, again, are accustomed to pray in much the same way as they would apply for a situation where only one candidate out of five hundred could receive the appointment; that is, they expect to be refused, but make their request on the chance that it may be successful. A great many people must feel at times, as they take part in public devotion, that it is apt to become somewhat unreal, a formal exercise to be got through rather than a really useful and vital outpouring of the deepest soul. And not a few would feel it to be a sign of weakness to rely upon prayer when there is anything serious to be done.

¶ Stevenson tells us that he stood glowering at the monks in the quietness of their retreat with a hot anger in his heart against such miserable skulkers, as he felt they were. Come out of that, his heart cried to them scornfully, and do a man's part towards keeping this great earth of ours spinning round and round! For the life of prayer looked to him a sheer waste of time, an obvious fatuity.[1]

And yet we all pray and we cannot help it. This does not mean merely that in hours of strong emotion we are driven to cry for help to some power beyond and above ourselves; but that we are praying all day long, sometimes on a high plane, sometimes on a low one, but pray we must. Any desire is prayer, and its power to achieve is in proportion to the drive behind it. Every life is an answered prayer; the response to a man's desires are what the man is; his prayers and their results are written in his face—sometimes we can read the language, and sometimes we cannot. But it is not only in character that prayers are answered; they are answered in circumstances too. A man's success in life, as it is called, is only the bringing into manifestation of that for which he prays from morning till night, year in and year out.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 177.

It is no exaggeration to say that men do remove mountains by prayer, although the prayer is translated into action. The men of force in the world are always men of prayer, even though they may not be good men. What they want they get, and they get it because they want it hard enough, and because they are prepared to pay the price of success. They never dream that they are really creating; they are only calling, and life responds in the same tone. There is no ascertainable limit to what the human will can do in gratifying the demands of the soul, but it never does more than bring into manifestation what is waiting to be summoned. Let us beware how we pray, for the one absolutely certain thing about our place in life is that it will be furnished in accordance with our prayer. Ask a man what he is thinking about most, planning and scheming for, and you have his real prayers. And these prayers are doing things far beyond what the world imagines. The man who attains success does so because he knows it is there already; he feels it inside him, and he drags it out with a strong hand. There are men who never would succeed, and these are the men who do not believe that the thing they want is already within themselves. Here is a great law that runs through all human life—believe and take. It requires both. You must see before you can take, and it is possible to see without taking.

¶ 'To be ambitious for wealth,' says an American writer,[1] 'and yet always expecting to be poor, to be always doubting your ability to get what you long for, is like trying to reach East by travelling West. There is no philosophy which will help a man to succeed when he is always doubting his ability to do so, and thus attracting failure.'

¶ When Philip of Spain sent the Spanish Armada against England, he had all the advantages on his side. All except one. The English had Drake, who knew his business and had faith in himself. The Spaniards had the Duke of Medina Sidonia, who sent this letter to the King:

'My health is bad, and from my small experience of the water I know that I am always sea-sick. The expedition is on such a scale, and the object is of such high importance, that the person at the head of it ought to understand navigation and sea fighting, and I know nothing of either. The Adelantado of Castile would do better than I. The Lord would help him, for he is a good Christian and has fought in naval battles. If you send me, depend upon it, I shall have a bad account to render of my trust.'

[1] O. S. Marden.

2. But there is a far higher sense in which this law holds good. Let us take our stand upon the highest when we pray, and ask for that, and that alone, which is worthy of the fellowship of Christ. Then we may rest assured we shall have what we ask, for it is only waiting an opportunity to come through. The being of God is like a boundless reservoir, and to seek the good in purity and sincerity of heart is like opening a channel for the waters of blessing to flow. 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.' But we have to ask before the gift can be part of ourselves. Let our life become a prayer for the revelation of God in man, and the answer is Christ. This is what the world needs—Christ, more Christ, Christ shining in our eyes and healing by our hands. The love of God can take a myriad aspects, but it never utters itself in a human soul without transforming that soul into Christ. And when that is done we see what the soul really is.

¶ Heaven, hell, the world are within us, man is the great abyss. . . . Man is only what he becomes—profound truth; but he becomes only what he is—truth still more profound.[1]

Make life one long prayer for the revelation of Christ. Know that that prayer is answered before we have prayed, and only waits the summons addressed to the Throne of grace. Be wary in praying for what is purely temporary and external, but do not shrink from doing so in so far as it may serve your main end. One thing ought to be made perfectly clear to every follower of Jesus, and that is that the life lived in communion with God cannot be an unhappy life. It may taste of sorrow, but sorrow is not its master. Faith in God is looking through the things that are seen to the things that are not seen; it is the realization that eternal love, and joy, and power are our heritage. All we can possibly want for time or eternity is already prepared for us in the kingdom of our Father. When the back feels too weak for the burden,

[1] Amiel.

tell Him so, and lay hold upon the Divine strength. When our pathway is shrouded in darkness and perplexity, and human wisdom is at fault, let us put our hand into the mighty clasp of God, and walk without fear. We may have to wait awhile before the clouds clear away, but clear they must. Even the best of us may for a moment lose sight of the grandeur beyond the squalor and the anguish. If so, all we can do is to pray as our Master prayed that we may remain faithful in the darkness to the vision we have seen in the light.

By What Authority

Mark xi. 27, 28.—'And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?'

1. Very early in the ministry of our Lord this note of authority is recognized. We are told 'the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.' The religious leaders resented this. While Christ 'taught with authority,' they taught by quoting authorities; while His teaching was vital and original, theirs was professional. Teaching in Galilee, however, was one thing, but when this teaching passed into action in Jerusalem—when the teacher of righteousness showed Himself as Messianic King—the crisis was reached. On Monday in Holy Week Christ entered the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves!

Those priests who were standing by when the drama was acted were forced to choke down their passion. They knew that if they raised their voice in protest they would be condemned in the eyes of all just men. For though this trade in the Temple was permitted and condoned, it had not gone without protest. In his own conscience every fair man knew that Christ's act could not be challenged. There was a hurried meeting of the Sanhedrin that night to arrange their course of action for the morrow. On Tuesday morning as soon as Christ re-entered the Temple courts the deputation from the Sanhedrin met Him with the question agreed on: 'By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?'

There is nothing necessarily wrong in asking such a question. They were only doing their official duty—these carefully trained and ordained rabbis—as they may have thought, in a reasonable way. It is easy for us, with the whole record before us, to underrate the real difficulties of conservative-minded men upon whom our Lord made such tremendous new claims. One may be quite sure that He did not underrate them.

What our Lord did, by a counter-question, was to remind them of a higher ministry which they, with their knowledge of their own Scriptures, should not have forgotten. What of the prophetic ministry? 'Jesus said unto them: I also will ask you one question: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? . . . And they answered and said: We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.' This question is no evasion, nor is it intended to embarrass the priests; it is in truth an answer to their own question. They knew that John had described himself as the forerunner of the Christ, and that he had borne witness repeatedly to His greater ministry. So they could not allow that the Baptist's ministry was 'from heaven.' And they dare not say 'from men' for they feared the people, who believed that John was a prophet. So it was that these men, who were the representatives of authority, had to confess that they could not tell whether John's baptism was from heaven or from men. If they could not decide that, still less could they pronounce on the authority of Jesus.

What our Lord did, when these questioners put their question to Him, was to force them to see that, at any rate, one part of the answering of it lay in the fact that men have within themselves the means of answering their own questions about every claim that presents itself to their allegiance. The question of authority in any form is always, when you take it far enough back, a moral question, a question of sincerity. It can be decided only by the sincere response of each individual to the truth he already believes. 'Think,' Christ said, 'of that baptism of John. Remember those crowds of men and women who flocked to the banks of the river Jordan with an intolerable weight upon their

consciences. Remember what they were when they had passed through that baptism—changed men and women. Remember all that he said about the need of real repentance, a change of character, if men were to come to God. Now tell Me, was that an earthly thing or was it a heavenly thing? Did you not know, then, that the power of God was breaking in upon human life?' And if they said what they in their hearts knew to be true, it was indeed a heavenly thing. If they had even honestly said: 'We are not sure, we do not know yet whether we think it is so'—honestly said that—there would have been no need for Christ further to answer their question. They would have been on the way to know by what authority He did those things. But because they were afraid, because there was a moral obstacle, the obstacle of insincerity, between Him and them, He could only say: 'Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.'

2. The interest of this incident in the Gospels, and the reason why it is worth while thinking over, lies in this: it shows how He whom we account to be the perfect Truth deals with one such instinctive way of questioning, and enables us to learn how He Himself answered such questions about authority.

In these days of ours there are a great many people who are asking for clearer light and more decisive guidance in regard both to the social order and to matters of religious faith and worship. They ask for clearer and more decisive guidance from visible authority. They complain often that they do not get it. And still more urgently, because touching so many things that concern the intimate conduct of life, comes the same demand for more clear and more decisive guidance in matters of ethical conduct. What ought Christian men and women to do about this practice or that?

Now it would be the height of unwisdom, it would be unjust, to make little of these demands. They may be very real demands, coming out of very real needs, especially those which relate to ethical conduct. The Church has got to meet them fairly and squarely. And yet we come back to the essential point of the answer which our Lord gave to the scribes and elders. Men say they want authoritative guidance. But that authoritative guidance can, after all, only come to them in the last resort as a reward of the sincere effort of moral response. Our Lord Jesus Christ offers Himself to men through the Holy Spirit, who is God realized in experience, as the clear and certain guide of life to any man who will come and put his trust in Him. That is a perfectly plain offer made to the ordinary man. It is certainly no vain offer. All Christian experience is the history of its answer. 'He that followeth me shall no longer walk in darkness.' 'Seek,' He says, 'and ye shall find.' But He does say, 'Seek.' He does not offer a book of rules, a code of conduct. He offers a spirit to be caught from His Spirit, a guide, a presence.

¶ 'Christ,' says Tertullian, 'is not the Convention, He is the Truth.' And to find truth and to go on finding truth every day will always mean one thing leading to another in matters of faith and the right way of worship, or of conduct and life. It means a sincerity of moral effort.

And here we come to the fundamental point in regard to these matters of demand for authoritative guidance. From his earliest days, it has been said, man has been a labour-saving animal. He makes instruments in order to save the labour of his hands. He makes rules in order to save the labour of his head. But there are certain domains of man's activity which have always eluded that propensity of his. Art is one. A great picture has never been painted, and never will be painted, by machinery or by technical knowledge of rules. And true religion is another. 'No longer,' said the Master of all religion, 'do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I call you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' And this is the essential distinction between religious faith which is simply a matter of throwing itself at the feet of a visible authority and asking no more, and religious faith that is of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He lived and died to make real to men. It must seek to obey Him absolutely and entirely, and to obey Him not as a servant, not as one who does not know the purpose of his lord, but as a friend who enters into it. The virtue of a servant is a great virtue, the virtue of obedience; but the virtue of a friend is a greater thing still—it is a thing which we call loyalty. It is the entering into the fellowship of Him to whom we commit our life.

The Parable of the Vineyard

Mark xii. 1.—'A certain man planted a vineyard.'

Of all the Parables of Jesus this is one of the most beautiful, one of the most poignantly tragic, and in its conclusion one of the most stern. It is an old parable made new. Shakespeare could repaint an ancient story so that under his hands it glowed with unsuspected colour, and laid upon the mind undreamed-of compulsions. So, in higher measure, with Jesus. Israel had frequently been compared to a vineyard. The classic instance is in the fifth chapter of Isaiah. Under the touch of Jesus Isaiah's story of the vineyard is fashioned afresh and filled with a new depth and meaning. For see what this old story is now made to reveal.

1. It reveals *man's privilege and responsibility.*

(1) There is the privilege of favourable setting and heritage. The vineyard was 'planted'; it was not a wilderness; it was a well-cultivated plot on a very fruitful hill. It was 'hedged about' to protect it from wild beasts. It had its 'winepress' for the harvesting of fruit; its 'tower' whence the approach of marauding foes could be seen, and where the vinedressers could find shelter. Every gift had been lavished on it, every preparation made, that it might 'bring forth abundantly.' The reference is clearly to Israel. Abraham, the father of his people, had left Ur of the Chaldees, because it was a city of evil breath. From that moment the Hebrews were a chosen people destined to bequeath to mankind the consciousness of a Holy God, as the Greeks were later destined to bequeath the sense of beauty, and the Romans the strength of governmental law. All endeavours converged on Israel that she might fulfil her appointed task. Moses came to lead her out from Egypt, and to lay upon her great decrees—tablets of stone reflecting the eternal verities written on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Israel had been 'planted.' She had been taught the worship of the one God while other nations were still immersed in polytheistic barbarism; she had been blessed in singers whose psalms have since become the world's confessional and hymnary; she had been 'hedged about' by prophetic warnings, harrowed by persecutions, and fertilised by countless mercies.

(2) There is the privilege of freedom. The 'vinedressers' in this story were under no restraint. They were left in sole possession. They were encouraged in their own initiative. The only condition of their leasehold was that from time to time God required the fruit of the garden at their hands.

¶ Edwin Markham has expressed this truth:

Back in the morning of the wistful years
God dreamed a wonder-dream, and then He spake:
'Lo, out of dust a mystery will I make:
Make man, and dower him with the gift of tears,
With dreams and valors and the shadow fears,
With love and longing and a heart to break,
A free soul poised for mastery or mistake,—
Then leave him alone before the great careers!
I know the risk, the terror of my deed,
Yet I must make him free to be the seed
Of seraphim who guard the cosmic gates:
Behold in his hand the glory and the curse
As he goes forth to build eternal fates:
Now there is danger in the universe!'

That freedom is ours. It is not an unlimited freedom, of course, but it is within limits a real freedom. We are not free to choose our heredity, but we are free to live for the worst or best of that heredity; not free to choose our native talent, but free to double the talent or to bury it in the earth; not free to select the vineyard, but free within that vineyard's capacity to hold it to ransom for its harvest, or to deliver it to a chaos of weeds.

(3) This freedom entails an equal responsibility. There was a rightful demand for the fruit of the garden. The veil of allegory is translucent; we can see quite clearly that it is the fruit of character which God expects. The teaching of Jesus was constantly concerned with human worth. When the disciples began to speak of earthly gain, He swung the discussion back to sanity: 'What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?' When men of fine promise were squandering their powers on a fishing boat, He called them to the human crusade: 'Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.' If the question of harvest prospects excited them, He recalled them to the foremost garnering: 'Lift up your eyes! The fields—the human fields—are white already unto harvest.' The demand of God is that this little plot of earth shall produce an

industrial order that blooms like a garden, homes that are like ripened grain, souls ever 'wearing the white flower of a blameless life.' That obligation was laid on Israel, and it is laid on every land. Thus the parable reveals both privilege and responsibility, and, with these, Jesus' overwhelming sense of foreordaining by God. God planted the garden of Israel. God hedged it. God sent His messengers unto it. Human history is not fortuitous; it issues from the purpose of the Eternal. Great men are not an accident, nor the 'national product of their heredity and environment'; a Will sends them! God is not a prisoner within His own laws, devoid of initiative: He is God indeed.

Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and He destroy.[1]

2. It reveals *the essential glory of Christ.* Look at the words, 'He had yet one, a beloved son,' or, as the old version puts it, 'Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved.' This sentence has a most important and vital bearing on the self-consciousness of Jesus. It shows us that Jesus thought of Himself as holding an absolutely unique relationship to God. And the uniqueness of the relationship is made all the more conspicuous by the fact that it is between Himself and the very noblest of men that Jesus in this place makes comparison. He exalts Himself above Moses, and Samuel, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and the rest of them. What were they? Servants. What was He? The beloved Son. And this assertion of unique relationship to God does not stand isolated and alone. It is consistently maintained throughout the Gospels. Even when Jesus teaches men to call God their Father and to think of themselves as His children, He draws a distinction between His Sonship and theirs. He taught His disciples to pray, saying, 'Our Father.' But even among the Twelve He draws a distinction between God's Fatherhood to Himself and His Fatherhood to them. 'I ascend,' He said, 'unto *my* Father and *your* Father, and unto *my* God and *your* God.' There is a sense, and a very beautiful sense, in which God is the Father of all men, and especially of them that believe; but in an altogether unique way He was *Father* to Jesus. There is a sense, and a very blessed sense, in which we are the sons of God—we become such by adoption; there is another sense in which Jesus is God's only begotten Son—the everlasting Son of the Father. *One Son!* The humble up-bringing at Nazareth, the seamless cloak, the poverty of His life, the shame of the Cross cannot hide or dim His glory.

¶ 'All others,' says Dr Dale, 'fall on their faces when the Divine glory is unveiled; the very seraphim veil their faces in their wings and continually do cry, "Holy"; Jesus alone stands erect and undismayed.'

¶ The true test, as it seems to me, between a view of Christ's nature which can be regarded as a legitimate development of historical Christianity and one which can only be looked upon as a new and different creed, is this, 'Does it admit the Divine Sonship of Christ in some unique, some solitary sense, or does it make Christ merely one of many sons of God?'[1]

3. It reveals *the infinite love of the Father.* God is the real subject of this story. 'He had yet one, a beloved son; he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.' And the 'He' who did all this is God. Though primarily the parable sets forth the love of God for Israel, it is a picture, too, of God's love for all men. With the great love of which this parable speaks He besets us and pursues us and seeks to save us. There are two characteristics of this love which the story emphasizes—its persistency and its self-sacrifice.

(1) *Its persistency.*—The description of how Israel treated God's servants is not imagination; it is sober history. One representative after another sent by God was maltreated and slain; but, instead of breaking off all relations, with a wonderful persistency of love God sent others and yet others. Rebuffs, injuries, insults did not quench or alienate His love. He yearned over this people. He exhausted all the ingenuity of the Divine love in the effort to bring this people back to Himself. And the Divine love is still the same in its unwearied persistency. Paul talks about the dimensions of this wonderful love—about its length, and depth, and height, and breadth. Its depth is marvellous, reaching down to the lowest of the low. Its height is marvellous, lifting its objects up into the purity and glory of sainthood; and its breadth is wonderful, embracing within its

[1] G. A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, 215.

[1] H. Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, 79.

sweep every nation and kindred and tongue. But of all the dimensions of the Divine love we marvel most at its length, at its persistency, at its endurance. It out-lasts, and out-persists, and out-endures every human love. We have done with His messages and His messengers what these Israelites did. We have turned deaf ears to them, we have mocked them, we have treated them lightly, we have refused and rejected them. The marvel is that after our manifold refusals and rebuffs God does not leave us alone. But there is infinite length in His love.

¶ 'If I were God,' cried Luther hotly, 'and the world had treated me as it has treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces.' But God forgets, forgives, blots it all out, comes again and again with His offer. 'Unwearied in forgiveness still, His heart can only love.'

(2) *Its self-sacrifice.*—How eager and anxious that master of the vineyard must have been for those husbandmen, when, to restore right relations between himself and them, he sent his *only son*, his *well-beloved son*, knowing to what he was sending him. And this is just a symbol and suggestion of the love of God. How God must have loved us men, who had so grievously sinned against Him, when, to save us, He gave His only begotten Son. We have no plummet to fathom a love like that. What an infinite price that gift cost God. For this is not Jesus' sacrifice only; it is the Father's sacrifice too.

¶ D. L. Moody once said that until he became a father he preached much about the sacrifice of the Son; but that afterward the burden of his preaching was oftener the love of God.[1]

[1] J. D. Jones.

¶ There is a very noble picture in the National Gallery. Christ is upon the Cross, which is shrouded deep in the gross darkness; and at first that is all one sees. Yet, as one looks longer, out of the blackness there looms up a Figure, with His arms tenderly upholding Christ, and His face stricken with an agony more awful even than the Saviour's own.[1]

Behind the Cross of Golgotha there is a cosmic Cross flinging its vast shadows. Behind the spear piercing the side of Jesus there is a spear piercing a 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' In no parable told by Jesus, not even in the story of the Prodigal, is the love of God in its persistence and its sacrifice more wonderfully revealed.

'Surely,' said the householder to himself, 'they will reverence my son.' And that was God's hope that, even though prophet after prophet had failed, His Son would succeed. It was a hope doomed to disappointment among the Jews. Is it to be a hope doomed to disappointment in our case? Or have we reverenced the Son? God has no weapon left in His armoury to touch and save us if we can reject the Son. Love can no further go than the Cross. It is the final appeal.

Behold the Lamb of God!
O Thou for sinners slain,
Let it not be in vain
That Thou hast died:
Thee for my Saviour let me take,
My only refuge let me make
Thy piercèd side.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 141.

REJECTED YET TRIUMPHING

Mark xii. 10.—'The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.'

THE brief drama of Christ's public life is now fast approaching the crisis. Jesus is well aware of the mounting tide of opposition. That it means death for Him must now be quite clear to Him. But the extraordinary thing is that He is not merely calm at the prospect; He does not seem to regard it as defeat. He seems to be assured that, in spite of His own death, or even by reason of it, some great success will be ushered in for Him and for God's reign. 'The stone which the builders rejected . . .'; of the rejection Jesus is in no doubt. As He told His Parable of the Vineyard, with its pointed reference to the leaders of religion, He could read His rejection again in their angry looks. But, as if to stay them as they slunk off resolved on His death, 'Stop!' He cried, 'granted I am

rejected; have you never read the Scripture: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner"?'

That drama, leading up through rejection to triumph, which was wrought out during these three eventful years, has been re-enacted on the most tremendous stage of world-history throughout the centuries from then till now. The great Western civilization in which we now live, reared on the ruins of Greece and Rome, presents, when we view it widely and deeply enough, a clash of titanic antagonisms, such as has never been witnessed before in the rise and decay of previous civilizations. On the one side of this cosmic struggle, that has lasted nearly two millennia, have been ranged the accumulated fighting instincts and energies of Europe's masterful races, and on the other have been the ideal forces of a religion in direct antagonism. Anthropologists recognize that the medley of races which we call Europe has been produced by a set of conditions unparalleled in the history of the race. To quote one scientist: 'For countless ages before history has view of him, the fighting male of the West has streamed across Europe in successive waves of advance and conquest, vanquishing, exterminating, overwhelming, over-mastering, taking possession. The fittest who have survived in these successive layers of conquest have been the fittest in virtue of the right of force, and in virtue of a process of military selection probably the longest, the sternest and the most culminating which the race has ever undergone.' It is this fighting pagan who has made the history of the West and has carried into all his institutions and life the belief in force as the ultimate power.

If that were the whole story, there would be no civilization as we have it to-day. But by some inscrutable irony of Providence, it has not been the great peaceful races of the East, but this fighting male of the West, who has fallen heir to a religion from the Orient which is the direct negation of force. This religion of love the pagan of Europe throughout the centuries has never been able either to assimilate or to expel. Under the impulse of instincts bred in him through thousands of years, he has gone forth and conquered the world by force, but these last eighteen hundred years he has found himself enmeshed in a system of ideas and ideals which have distracted him and pulled him constantly in a contrary direction. He has built up philosophies which have argued with this alien religion; with his practical mind he has constructed sciences which have left no room for this disturbing faith. As he could not get it out of his system he has tried to come to some compromise with this religion, and has set up great ecclesiastical systems, and has surrounded them with all the pomp of his fighting power. He has taken the Cross, symbol of Love suffering and forgiving, and placed it at the head of crusading armies. Compounded of his grasping instincts and his renouncing faith he has fashioned an amalgam Hero and Saint, the Knight of Chivalry, the Christian warrior. To establish the dogmas of his compromise faith he has drenched the world in blood.

But in the meantime this invasive religion, in spite of all his instinctive efforts to change it, has penetrated into every part of the civilization. In the respite after every bath of blood the religion has stolen a march on the pagan, and against all his instincts and history he has dreamed dreams of a world humane and free and equal. This fighting, dominating male, despite himself, has liberated the serfs and slaves of every clime; woman from being a chattel he has admitted as his equal companion; he has built up a system of justice that he, the strong, should not prey on the weak. But still the flaming vision in his soul will not let him rest. Beyond justice he sees love and builds hospitals for the sick and the weak, and wonderingly sets about reforming his prisons that even they might regenerate and not punish. His religion sings to him of swords beaten to ploughshares, and this splendid pagan of the ages sees a Vision of a world leagued in peace. Dimly beyond the horizon of his ken he guesses at some strange infinite goal, alien to the passions of the past, alien to the lusts and fears of his present.

Which of us can doubt that to-day we stand somewhere near the climax of this astounding drama of the ages? Up to the middle of last century, progress though slow seemed steady and sure. The Peace which closed the Napoleonic Wars a century ago, though it led to reactions, was held amid almost rapturous hopes of permanent peace. In 1834 Mazzini and the 'Young Europe' association were dreaming of world fraternity. In 1841 Tennyson was singing of the day when the battle flags would be

furled in the Parliament of Man. When Prince Albert opened the First Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 many fondly believed that the reign of permanent peace had at last been inaugurated. But almost immediately after 1850 there was a sharp and strong reaction. In 1859 was published Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and, to quote the words of a Presidential Address to the Royal Society, 'In a way to which history furnishes no parallel the opinions of mankind may have been said to have changed in a day.' During the next half-century the *Origin of Species* became the bible of the doctrine of the omnipotence of force. The primitive pagan, that seemed to have fallen half-asleep, started wide awake, to discover, as he believed, all his deepest hereditary instincts justified. A new tone and a new theory begin to make their way into every department of European life, into industry, diplomacy, the labour movement, and into science and philosophy. War, struggle, was accepted as the natural and necessary condition of all life. It was this half-century that saw not only the massing of armaments for the mighty conflict between the nations, but the growth of acute antagonism in industry, the rise of a class-conscious proletariat and its striving for a united world-front, relying on force for victory. It would seem as though the primeval pagan giant in Europe had roused himself and summoned all his brute energies to shake off the incubus of his late inherited religion and all its ideals of service and love. The current spirit was described thus by Harold Begbie: 'Life exists for *Me*. All the dim æons have toiled to produce ME. I care not a jot for the ages ahead and the sons of men who shall inhabit the earth when I am dust beneath their feet. Give Me my rights. Stand clear of My way. I want and I will have.'

But while primitive passion was shrieking in a hundred shrill notes of the great world organ, there could be heard swelling to ever richer fullness the deep diapason of social passion, calling for service, sacrifice, renunciation. As never in the world before, through literature and art, and along every avenue by which the heart and conscience of the millions could be reached, there have thronged appeals to self-surrender. During the last fifty-sixty years there have joined battle all along the line the massed forces of the ancestral instincts and passions of the pagan, meeting in shock the gathering might of a religion that cannot be stayed. The clash of the world-war, which completely filled our horizon, was but one engagement in a far mightier conflict. As the individual soldier sees only an infinitesimal part of the battle and from the fortunes of his own company or battalion cannot guess the issue of the whole engagement, so we amid the clamour and confusion of these recent years must retire to some view-point of knowledge and vision, if we would gain perspective and proportion and attain some glimpse of the world-drama in which we play a part. As we scan closely the record of the centuries and see the long travail in which, despite the ever-surgent passions of primitive man, the tiger is being subdued and the forces of justice and equality and humaneness and gentleness are emerging to triumph, and all of them under the urge and leadership of the religion of Jesus, do we not well to cry as did Christ Himself: 'The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner'?

But the victory is not yet. Whether the Calvary of Humanity and the last shock of the antagonistic forces is past or yet to come, who shall say? But sure it is that this conflict, whose field is the whole world of man's life and whose record is well-nigh eighteen centuries, is no mere clash of vast impersonal world-forces. It is being fought out in every individual life. That is the real battle-ground. If Christ is to win, there is no other place for Him to win than in the heart of man. And when He suffers recoil on a vast scale, and tenderness and mercy seem for a time to lie slain over the whole world, that is nothing else but the summation of individual betrayals, sweeping on and carrying with them thousands of the wavering. But such is the infectious might of courage that one man may rally a thousand, even a nation; and one man standing firm for selfless service will catch the eye and nerve a thousand, who in business, in industry, in the Church, in politics, and in international life were falling back before the old pagan slogans that resound on every hand.

If we could catch the secret of Jesus and, holding true communion with Him, both in the secret places of the soul and on the field of action, should know the reality of righteousness and the might of love, we too should be sure of God and of His victory and in the midst of seem-

ing defeat of right and impotence of love, we too would hail the certain day when 'the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.'

OLIVER DRYER.

Respect of Persons

Mark xii. 14.—'We know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men.'

IN the New Testament there is unfolded to us how much the Incarnation of the Son of God implies and entails. Christ came into a world where men were blinded with the pride of race and estranged by its bitter prejudices. But His gospel proclaims one common salvation for Jew and Gentile. All mankind have been loved with the same love, and redeemed by the same sacrifice. There is no respect of nations with God. Moreover, Christ came into a world whose social fabric was founded and built up upon slavery. But the gospel declares to masters and bondsmen alike that they all have the same Judge in heaven. Before His awful tribunal human distinctions shrivel up and vanish away. There is no respect of persons with Him.

1. Among Christians in England to-day few will challenge these elemental truths. We take democracy for granted, without always understanding that 'there is no basis for democracy except in a dogma about the divine origin of man'; and we pay lip-service at least to equality and fraternity. Our difficulties begin when we try to work out these principles in detail and to apply them to practical affairs. The very word 'respect' still carries a certain weight of obligation. Every serious man admits that he is bound to show respect for age and experience, for learning and intellectual distinction, for long public service, for official rank and responsibility in a democratic State. A great captain of industry deserves not less deference than the General of a brigade. We recognize that even the most popular form of government demands subordination and discipline and obedience to authority—just as it would be fatal to dispense with them on board an ocean steamer. To this extent we all confess that the powers that be are ordained of God. Nevertheless, in the ordinary conduct of life, people are constantly making false distinctions between persons. We render honour where honour is not due, because we confuse the substance with the accidents. We mistake the surface appearance for the inward reality.

¶ 'Respect of persons,' says old Trapp, the Puritan commentator, 'is sin against race, place, and grace'; or, to quote a much-too-forgotten poet, the author of *Night Thoughts*:

> Fools drop the man, then count
> And vote the mantle into majesty.

Consider, for instance, the abject worship of success. What is more common—yet what is less Christian? How many of our Lord's apostles appeared to succeed in this life? And certainly in the present age of competition and self-advertisement those are not the noblest qualities which make a man outwardly and conspicuously successful. Yet we crown the popular author who can command a huge circulation; we run after the popular orator who can always draw a crowd.

Or take the pursuit of what is called social success. In English society the old exclusive barriers have broken down and disappeared. The aristocratic caste, which once depended upon birth, has flung open its gates and widened its borders. Yet we still see multitudes of people who spend themselves in striving and scheming and grovelling to gain admission into the circle just above them. These 'climbers,' to use an expressive name, are obsequious to any person whatever who, they hope, may help them to climb. Theirs is the precise spirit of the snob; for, as Thackeray said, it is the nature of a snob 'meanly to admire mean things.' The New Testament describes this attitude of mind as 'holding men's persons in admiration for the sake of advantage.' More vulgar still is the deference which people show to a rich man, however he may have gained his money. Ninety years ago De Tocqueville pointed out in his famous book on America that a democratic community is dangerously tempted to overvalue material wealth. Has the United States escaped this deadly temptation to measure life by the gold standard? Dare we say that we ourselves have conquered it? To most English people money appears to be one chief tangible proof and token of success. Yet one of our own prophets warns

us that those who worship success of this kind are foredoomed to become slaves and cowards.

2. The spirit of the age too often contrives to infect the Church. Even sincere Christian men and women are not proof against tendencies and temptations such as these. We do homage, for instance, to a minister because he has the gift of popular speech, and we practically take that as the criterion of spiritual efficiency. In our churches we find it hard to recognize a saint in the gallery who wears shabby garments and talks with a Galilean accent; but we reserve chief seats for people who drive up in motor-cars.

¶ If anywhere democracy seems natural, it should be in the eyes of God; and yet, if Americans show anywhere social demarcations, it is in the province of religion. This is true, not only of different churches where the expense of membership is so unequal that in large cities rich and poor are farther apart on Sundays than on week-days, but it is true of the sects themselves.[1]

¶ One of the memorable words of the Great Duke was his rebuke of an officious person who had pushed aside a poor man who was going up before him to the altar, bidding him 'make way for his Grace the Duke of Wellington.' 'Not so,' said the Duke—'we are all equal here.'

Again, we habitually allow religious institutions and societies to be controlled by men whose main qualification is that they give money. Some munificent millionaire might bias the policy of half our missionary and philanthropic enterprises, if he cared to pay for the privilege. This unholy respect of persons is possible to us, because we have not yet learned to look at earthly things as they appear before the pure and awful gaze of Jesus Christ, we have not faith to measure them by His standard or to appraise them according to His reckoning.

¶ Once at Cannes an equerry came to ask Father Vaughan if he would object to the presence of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII.) at the next Sunday's sermon. He replied: 'I am accustomed to preach as in the presence of the King of kings, and shall not be made nervous by the presence of anyone else whomsoever.'[2]

[1] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Americans*, 500.
[2] C. C. Martindale, *Bernard Vaughan, S.J.*, 63.

Surely it must be one chief aim of Christian worship that we should bow our souls in utter humility before the very presence of Christ Himself—that we may learn of Him to love what He loves, and to value what He values, and to despise what He despises and condemns. Our Lord has blotted out respect of persons once for all, nailing it to His Cross.

Christianity and the State

Mark xii. 17.—'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

1. At first sight our Lord's answer to the question put to Him appears to be enigmatic, and may possibly be thought evasive. As to this, it should be borne in mind that a very dangerous trap had been laid for Him.

He was dealing with a joint deputation of Pharisees and Herodians. These two parties, while at variance with one another, were in coalition against Cæsar and against our Lord. The Pharisees stood for the highest doctrine of theocracy, that is, for the principle that Jehovah was the sole as well as the supreme King of the Jews. They therefore held that the domination of Cæsar was an offence against God even more than an intrusion upon the Jewish state. The Herodians were just ordinary patriots who supported the rights of Herod as king of the Jews, and resented the over-lordship of the Roman Empire, as represented by Cæsar. Each section feared, from its own particular point of view, the influence and claims of Jesus Christ. Hence both combined to ask a question that would not only place our Lord in a difficulty, but would probably lead to His destruction. They thought that by paying a fulsome compliment to His sincerity, fearlessness and reverence they might betray Him into answering by a single 'Yes' or 'No.'

For their purpose it mattered little which attitude He might adopt. If He were to say 'Yes,' He would be represented as having surrendered both the claims of God and the hope of Israel. He would also thereby have renounced His own claim to be the Messiah, and thus destroy His influence with the people. If, on the other hand, He were to say 'No,' He would stand forth as a revolutionary leader, and probably be destroyed by the government. For the purpose of the deputation, therefore, it

was essential that He should give an explicit answer that could be used against Him, and that their own position should in no way be compromised thereby.

Our Lord turned the tables upon them with marvellous self-command and dexterity. He bade them bring Him a penny, and elicited from them the admission that it bore the image and superscription of Cæsar. Thus He made them parties to the discussion, and secured from them the confession that both Pharisees and Herodians, whatever their abstract principles, did, as a matter of fact, render a practical acknowledgment of the over-lordship of Cæsar. Then, adopting this basis, He threw upon them the responsibility of deciding the question for themselves by saying: 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

Yet our Lord, while parrying a stroke that was intended to be deadly, simply followed His usual procedure, and supplied illuminating guidance for all the future. It was always His method to lay down the principles that should shape conduct, not the rules that would fetter it. Then He left the precise meaning and the practical application of such principles to be discovered by earnest and conscientious searching, and to be carried out by thoroughgoing and fearless fidelity. This is the way of spiritual freedom, which emphasizes and draws out personal responsibility, and avoids the dictation that would destroy it.[1]

¶ As to the particular mode in which Jesus parried the question of his enemies, nothing, we think, could be more admirable. The retreat of Jesus from the casuistry of faction to the permanent relations of the soul, his hint that, amid the changing pressures and coercions of the world, an imperishable realm remains open for human fidelity and Divine communion, we cannot but regard as not only an acute escape from artifice, and a wise check to zealotry, but in the highest degree dignified, beautiful, and profound.[2]

2. Christianity is not directly concerned with politics as such. It is concerned with men. It has to do with the heart and soul of living men, and through them it will affect the whole domain of duty, private and social, political and religious. Christ did not content Himself with saying, pay Cæsar the tax which you own to be due by the very possession of Roman money. He makes obedience to God the standard of obedience to all earthly authority. Duty to God is the ultimate test—that is how Christ frees the human mind from all kinds of thraldom; but duty to God implies all duties. He who renders to God the things which are God's will render to Cæsar and to all men that which is their rightful due. Whatever duties are involved in the actual relationships, these the Christian must perform, and these he performs because of his higher duty to God. The Kingdom of God is more than of this world, and men can be citizens of that Kingdom under any circumstances, even if their country be under a foreign yoke. Christ opens up to men a Fatherland of the spirit, from which no human power can evict them. This is the great religious significance of our Lord's wise answer.

¶ 'All his activities,' says Lord Morley, 'were in his own mind one. This is the fundamental fact of Mr Gladstone's history. Political life was only part of his religious life. It was religious motive that, through a thousand channels and avenues, stirred him and guided him in his whole conception of active social duty.'

3. There seem points in Christianity which connect it rather with anarchism than with constituted authority—its unflinching criticism of social conditions, its demand for justice and its undying hatred of injustice, its indignation against oppression and wickedness in high places, its sympathy and tenderness with the oppressed and outcast. The gospel is a social message, a proclamation of the rights of the poor and weak, and it might be thought almost to give an excuse for revolution. Also, the loyalty it demands for 'another King, one Jesus,' seems to lift its followers above all lower judicatories. It proclaims the spiritual independence which makes a man free from outside interference. There was a temptation in early times, as there is still in all times of high feeling and spiritual vision, to despise the inferior power of the State and make a man a law to himself. Antinomianism is a heresy which insidiously dogs the heels of spiritual religion. When we say rightly that the spiritual man alone can be the judge of spiritual things,

[1] J. Scott Lidgett. [2] Martineau.

it seems an easy step to go further and say that the spiritual man can refuse to be judged of any in any sphere.

Apart from any such extravagances of Christian freedom, there have been times when insurrection has been a sacred duty in the interests of the social order itself, as well as in the interests of freedom and the higher life of man. There have been times when true men are called to obey God rather than men. It is said of a philosopher who was disputing with Augustus Cæsar that at a stage in the dispute he began to weaken in his argument. When asked afterwards the reason, he replied, 'Would you have me contend with the master of thirty legions?' There have been times when no such graceful concession has been possible for Christians, when they have been driven by the imperative of conscience to contend at all costs and stand firm against all powers of earth, against Cæsar and his thirty legions.

¶ 'My authority ends,' said Napoleon, in a wise and weighty sentence, 'where the authority of conscience begins.'

At the same time the Divine right of the State in its true sense is upheld and enforced in the Christian teaching. Some organization of society is necessary for the moral order of things, and so the Christian faith, in practice, has been the strongest bulwark of the authority of the State, that men may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Constituted authority has rights over us by virtue of our existence. The social order is of God: law and its representatives have their source of power in God; and it is the duty of Christians to give honour and willing obedience so far as conscience permits. This is a lesson of our Lord's own life, who came not as a revolutionary and advocated no political propagandism, and who pointed to duty to God as the great standard and test of all life.

4. The text may be read not only as a plea for obedience to lawful authority and the recognition of the supremacy of the State, but also as a plea for active interest in public affairs by all who have pledged themselves as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is especially so in our democratic days when government after all is the embodiment of the people's will, when it is representative of ourselves. If we blame it, we have only ourselves to blame. It has claims on us: we have duties towards it, and what have we done to make the kingdoms of this world the Kingdom of God and His Christ? If we complain of civic or national government, if we lament about public life or social needs or reforms or the want of reforms, if we sneer about politics as a game, a sphere for personal ambitions, whose is the fault? The responsibility for the State, the law, politics, and social conditions is ours. The gospel is concerned with soul first, but the life that is offered to God must spend itself in the service of men. If we truly give ourselves to the things of God, we dare not selfishly shut our eyes to the things of Cæsar.[1]

Answering the Sadducees

Mark xii. 18.—'Then come unto him the Sadducees.'

THE Sadducees are described as the people 'who say that there is no resurrection.' Of course that is not a complete description of anybody. No one creed consists altogether of negations, and, even if negations are the prominent thing, we have to discover what the moral temper is out of which they spring before we can tell what they are worth; and that moral temper was what Jesus referred to when He said to His disciples, 'Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Sadducees.' The Sadducees were what might be called the rationalistic party among the Jews. They affected Greek culture and emancipation from the bigotry and prejudices of their own people. They were friendly to religion *as an institution*, but they did not understand it at all as a spirit and a life. Consequently the Sadducees laid great stress upon the law, but they undervalued the prophets; they undervalued all the conquests of faith, all the aspirations of faith, such as are represented in the belief in immortality. They filled the high priesthood and all the profitable and important places in the Temple service; but, although they were the chief ministers of religion, they were hostile to all real religious faith and earnestness—what they would call superstition and fanaticism. They looked at life in what would now be called a 'positivist' or a 'secularist' spirit. They said: 'Here is our life, we see what it is, and we see the whole of it; we will live for what we

[1] Hugh Black, *According to My Gospel*, 255.

know.' And they said there was no resurrection, no immortality, no angel or spirit.

But Jesus was not a Sadducee. He believed in heaven, He believed in the angels, He believed in a blessed immortality, He believed that God had made man for that, and called man to that; and the Sadducees felt that they were immeasurably remote from Him. And now, at the very end, when all His enemies were conspiring against Him, they also joined to try and discredit Him with the people; and they came with this mocking question about the seven brothers who had all in succession married the same woman, 'In the resurrection whose wife shall she be?' It is as if they had said, 'We cannot possibly believe in a doctrine which confronts us with insoluble problems.'

1. What strikes us first here is that this difficulty is an artificial one. Plainly the case was manufactured. Probably it was a familiar difficulty, and had done duty in many a conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It had been brought to its present perfection of absurdity by constant use, and no doubt it had left the laugh in many a dispute on the Sadducees' side; but then the laugh is not much to have on your side. Where such great things as God, the soul, and immortality are concerned, to appeal to ridicule is to show an entire incapacity for understanding them.

Jesus answers their question quite straightforwardly. 'Do ye not therefore err?' He says. He frankly disagrees with the Sadducees. And that fundamental error, He tells them, lies in an assumption which is false, namely, that the life to come must simply reproduce this life, and renew all its relations. The truth is, the life beyond death is so constituted that the question of marriage can never rise in regard to it. Marriage has its root in nature; it has reference to the succession of generations. But in that world there is no death, no succession of generations needed, no marrying or giving in marriage; and therefore the question is inept and out of place. If there is any laugh at all it is against the Sadducees, who have only made themselves look foolish.

Now, this teaching of Jesus, that the life beyond is a life without marrying or giving in marriage, is not to be misunderstood, as if in that life beyond there would be no relation, or no peculiar relation, between those who have been husband and wife on earth; all it denies is that there will be any natural relation such as would create the difficulty raised by the Sadducees. But what of that? Even on earth the natural relation ought to pass away; even on earth the natural relation does pass away into a spiritual one. The husband and wife who became one flesh become one mind, one soul, one spirit. That higher relation is engrafted upon the lower one; it grows out of it; it is the thing which God contemplates in the formation of the natural connection. And because it is spiritual, it is capable of immortality.

¶ 'All I can say about the text is that it has nought to do with me and my wife,' Charles Kingsley wrote once to a friend. 'I know that, if immortality is to include in my case identity of person, I shall feel to her for ever what I feel now. That feeling may be developed in ways which I do not expect; it may have provided for it forms of expression very different from any which are among the holiest sacraments of life: of that I take no care. The union I believe to be as eternal as my own soul. I have no rule to say in what other pair of lovers it may or may not be eternal. I leave all in the hands of a good God.'

¶ Mrs Browning sings of her husband:

> The widest land
> Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
> With pulses that beat double. What I do
> And what I dream include thee, as the wine
> Must taste of its own grapes.

2. But our Lord not only exposes the error of the Sadducees, He exposes its cause also. 'Ye do err,' He says, 'not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' The Sadducees thought themselves the enlightened party, the *illuminati*; and those who believed in immortality were to them fanatics and obscurantists who believed anything. But Jesus ascribes their error to *ignorance*. Two things, He says, have led them astray.

(1) They did not know *the power of God*. Men judge of God's power, as a rule, by what they see. They look at Nature and they see birth and death, an endless succession and alternation of generations; but they do not see any possibility of immortality under present conditions. Immortality here, like the immortality of Tithonus, who lived on and on and on

into ever-deepening age, would be a curse and not a blessing; and because people do not know how to imagine conditions different and congruous to immortality, they are apt to doubt the thing itself. Yet Jesus says that to doubt it for this reason is to limit God's power, and His power is not to be measured by Nature; it is not to be measured by experience; it is not to be measured even by what imagination enables us to construct out of experience. All these things, as Job says, are but a whisper of His power, and the thunder of it who can comprehend? And on this very point of God's power our proofs are greater than theirs. In the New Testament the great proof of God's power is this very thing which the Sadducees called in question. 'God Almighty' in the New Testament is synonymous with 'God which raiseth the dead.' The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus have permanently widened our conception of what God can do; they have given us a glimpse of the possibilities of life under new conditions, quite unlike those in which we now live, and have taken away so much more reason for questioning whether immortality can be.

¶ It is one thing to know that spring is coming, because the almanac tells us so; surely it is another, some sweet April day, to feel upon the brow a gust of vernal air, with its mystic fragrance, telling that spring *is here*. So even before Jesus, men had lived to whom God gave the assurance that they were His eternally. Yet they were few, and their trust flickered like a candle's flame. But the experience of Jesus revealed immortality in being. What happened on Easter morning proved for good and all that over this world of graves there rises the almighty love of God.[1]

(2) But what Jesus dwells on principally is, not their ignorance of God's power, but *their ignorance of the Scriptures*. 'Ye do err,' He says, 'not knowing the scriptures.' That is to say, we have the word of Jesus for it that 'the scriptures' (which here means, of course, the Old Testament) contain a revelation of immortality. And yet many people have difficulty in understanding how Jesus here speaks about it. Have you never read, He says, in the Book of Exodus how God says to Moses at the bush, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' Everybody has read that, and yet not everybody has seen in it an argument for immortality. It seems so obvious that what the words mean is, 'I am the Person who *was* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' It seems so unreal to put a stress upon the 'am' and say, 'I *am* the God of Abraham,' and therefore Abraham lives. But in point of fact there is no 'am' at all in either Greek or Hebrew in this passage, and Jesus does not argue from the tenses like a grammarian. What His argument does rest on is this fact, that God pledged Himself to man to be his God, and in that friendship of God there is the assurance of a life that can never end. It is not a question of parsing; it is a question of spiritual insight. Anybody who understands what is meant by the fact that God became the God of Abraham understands that in that relation there is a promise to Abraham of a life against which death is powerless. On the one hand, can we exhaust God's friendship in seventy years, can we discover anything of the unsearchable riches that God has to impart to the creatures whom He calls into that intimate relation to Himself? And, on the other hand, can we believe that God really loves us, directs His whole Providence for our discipline, is at cost to shape our characters, sends His Son into the world that we may be lifted up from an animal to a spiritual life, from a natural to a Divine life, that we may have the heart of children of God formed in us; can we believe that God spends all that upon man's life, that God evokes, through all that labour and sacrifice, a filial spirit in the children of men, only that at the end of a few short years He may see them pass into nothingness? According to the teaching of Jesus, God is not so loveless, and cannot be so bereaved of His children. Because He lives, they whose God He is shall live also. 'Unite thyself,' St Augustine said, 'unto His eternity, and thou shalt be eternal with Him.'

It is very interesting and confirmatory to notice how in the Old Testament itself, whenever the faith in immortality breaks through and becomes clear, it is along these lines. In that oldest passage of all in the Book of Genesis, 'Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him,' we find this. *God* took him; not disease, not death, not nothingness, not an accident or a chance, but *God* took the man who walked with Him.

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Studies in Christian Truth*, 93.

¶ A little girl was telling the story of Enoch in her own way. 'Enoch and God,' she said, 'used to take long walks together. And one day they walked further than usual; and God said, "Enoch, you must be tired; come into My house and rest."'[1]

And not in the Old Testament only do we find this, but in the New Testament as well, as in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, where the Apostle says, God would be ashamed to be called our God if He did not prepare for us a city. It is God Himself who by His love has put the hope of a life beyond death into our hearts, and He would be ashamed to be called our God if He were not going to fulfil the hope He has inspired. And that argument of an apostle is confirmed by our Saviour Himself when He says: 'In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.' I would never have left you under a false impression. I would never have shown to you a love so great that it inspired immortal hope in your hearts if that hope had only been to be cast away. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.

¶ Canon Ellerton's familiar hymn voices the instructed response of believing hearts throughout the ages—

> God of the living, in whose eyes,
> Unveiled Thy whole creation lies;
> All souls are Thine; we must not say
> That those are dead who pass away;
> From this our world of flesh set free,
> We know them living unto Thee.

No one can believe in immortality without a constant struggle and strain to keep hold of his faith. It is not easy to believe, but it is easy to lose faith; and that is why the Apostle says in such a significant connection, 'Fight the good *fight* of faith; lay hold of *eternal life*'; not 'State the good case of the faith'; not 'Work out the clear arguments of the faith'; but 'Fight the good fight.' It is a moral effort that is wanted to retain our hold upon God and all that God has promised to us. And, if doubts of these things do come into our minds, they are to be *fought*; they are not to be afforded a material lodgment in the soul. 'Beware,' Jesus says, 'of the leaven of the Sadducees.' Be on your guard against everything that makes the mind worldly, that makes it sceptical, that makes it doubtful of God, doubtful of the greatness of what God can do for man.

[1] Hubert L. Simpson.

The First Commandment

Mark xii. 30.—'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.'

In the Old Testament the two great commandments—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God'; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—lie quite hidden and separate from one another, one in Deuteronomy, the other in Leviticus. And for the first time in the world's history, Christ drew these two together, and said, 'They are inseparable, Religion and Morality.' Do not dream of God as something apart from love. The love of God is inseparable from the love of man. Love of man springs from love to God; and love to God issues in love to man.

Yet there are many in our day who would gladly take over the ethics of Jesus without His religion. The one seems to be within their reach, the other they are doubtful about. They covet His friendliness and sympathy with men, His truth and strength and courage, in its beauty and perfection. They would willingly take Him as their example. But we no sooner come to any honest attempt to imitate Jesus Christ than we discover that we must begin further back than with His outward acts—that His life and teaching are inseparable from those deep-seated religious convictions that made Him what He was. His ethics are so interwoven with His religion that we simply cannot have one without the other. The very atmosphere in which He lived and moved was that of the encompassing presence of God. The strength and gladness of it coloured all His thought and speech and action.

¶ Many a country lad left his home to follow the lure of the sea, in the old days of sailing ships, thinking that all that was needed to make him as good a sailor as the best was to know his ship and her rigging and her behaviour, and how to handle her skilfully in all sorts of weather—only to discover very soon that he could never make a master mariner without a knowledge of the heavens, too, and of the distant constellations of the night, and of the use of logarithms, so as to be able to calculate his position from

the sun and stars, and thus be able to find his way across the world. No conceivable mastery of the technique of the ship could make him a good seaman without the higher knowledge of navigation, to enable him to put his seamanship to useful purpose.[1]

1. It may be asked how love can be regarded as a command or duty, seeing that it is so little subject to the will; or how it is possible to love an invisible and infinite Being. In reality it is not so much a commandment as the expression of an ideal, and its 'Thou shalt' is that kind of obligation which we ever feel in the presence of a higher ideal of duty or character. 'We needs must,' says the poet, 'love the highest when we see it,' and therefore we must needs love God when we see Him as He truly is—the Infinite and Eternal Goodness. The God from whom has come all the goodness which we see around us in Nature and man—all the bounty and beauty, all the truth and justice, all the mercy and pity, all the sympathy and sacrifice—must be lovable.

It is said that we cannot love an invisible or infinite Being. But the God we are bidden love is not invisible in the sense that He is unknown or unrevealed. What calls forth our love in our friends is, in its essence, as unseen as that which we love in God. What we love in them is not what we see, but what we cannot see—the unseen spiritual qualities which face, speech, and action express and reveal. Through what we see we are led to love the spiritual being, nature, or character which cannot be seen. It is in the same way we come to love God. We love Him through and because of every manifestation of His goodness which we see in the universe, in human life, and in the Face of Jesus Christ our Lord. And God is more and greater than all His manifestations. Every revelation is meant to make Him more real and near and intimate to the souls of His children, to prepare the way for a communion more personal and immediate, to lead us deeper and deeper into the fellowship of Him who is the source of all truth and goodness, of all beauty and joy. God has made us for Himself. He wants our confidence, our obedience, our spiritual fellowship.

2. The words 'heart,' 'soul,' 'mind,' 'strength,' are not meant, of course, to define, but to emphazise—to show that true religion is not the isolated allegiance of one side or part of our nature, but the consecration of every power of our being and of every relation of our life. Religion, as interpreted by Jesus, summons into its service all the manifold powers and activities of our being—the affections of the heart, the aspirations of the soul, the energies of the mind, the strength of the will; it seeks to gather up our feelings, thoughts, and will into one great commanding passion for God.

¶ Somebody has finely said that it does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him. An early African Christian, Arnobius, tells us that we must 'cling to God with all our senses, so to speak.' And Thomas Carlyle gave us a picture of the ideal believer when he wrote of his father that 'he was religious with the consent of his whole faculties.'[1]

(1) First of all, religion is of the *heart*. Long before it shows itself as thought, it stirs within us as feeling. Though the mind must purify and direct what is given through the heart, yet let us not be misled into assuming that religion consists primarily or chiefly in movements and attitudes of the mind, that it is fundamentally a thing of the mind—a creed, a science, a philosophy. We may have all the truth concerning the universe and life and God which there is to be known, and yet not be religious in the slightest degree. Reason can only direct, it cannot move. True religion is essentially feeling, awe, wonder, reverence, the sense of dependence, trust, submission, shame, penitence, gratitude, hope: kindled in the heart by many and varied experiences—such as the mystery of life, the integrity of the order of Nature, the discernment of Divine purpose in history, the sense of weakness and failure, the surprise of a great joy or a great sorrow, the utterances of prophets and seers, the example and influence of the living, the memory of the dead, the wondrous power of Jesus Christ, the pathetic and tender appeal of His life and Cross.

¶ Pascal describes faith as 'God felt by the heart,' and Schleiermacher finds the essence of religion in the sense of utter dependence. Many of us recognize ourselves as most consciously religious in

> that serene and blessed mood
> In which the affections gently lead us on.

[1] H. Kingman, *Building on Rock*, 20.

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 31.

Our highest inspirations commonly come to us in a wistful yearning to be like the Most High, in a sense of reconciliation with Him, in a glowing enthusiasm for His cause, in the calm assurance of His guidance and protection, in the enlargement of our natures as they become aware of His indwelling. 'We *feel* that we are greater than we *know*.'[1]

(2) Religion is not only of the heart, it is of the *soul*. By the soul is here meant that higher range of man's spiritual nature which relates him directly to God—gives him open vision, and places his spirit in immediate communion with the Father of spirits. The command to love God with the soul is a call to cultivate the affections, which find their natural and direct expression in prayer—the prayer of adoration and communion. It is to know the mystic's sense of nearness to God. It is to live the spiritual life whose secret is immediate communion with God, the meeting of spirit with spirit, child with Father. How far we are from doing this! In these hurrying days we are constantly tempted to neglect the soul. The world is in the ascendant, and life loses its depth; religion becomes more and more mechanical and conventional; the high uplifting, unspeakable intercourse of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit, and all those deeper and finer phases of religious experience which we describe as mysticism, are becoming to us increasingly unfamiliar and strange.

(3) But religion is not only of the heart and the soul, but also of the *mind*. It matters what we think about God, and how we worship and serve Him. We are reasonable beings, and our service of God must therefore be a reasonable service—the service of the mind as well as of the heart and soul. Every genuine feeling of the heart, every genuine experience of the soul, turns to the mind for justification. We cannot long live and hold by that which has no intellectual validity, by any sentiment which does not rest upon reality, and fails to commend itself to reason. Religion is a weak and mischievous thing when it is mere emotion. While we believe in the primacy of the heart, yet the heart needs the head, if our religious development is to be healthy and symmetrical, and if religion is to be realized in any fair or worthy form. When we turn to God, it must be with the whole man—with the mind as well as with the affections and the will. The love of God can never be perfect in us, or be moving towards perfection, without the aid which the mind gives to the heart and soul. The complete sacrifice demands right thinking as well as right feeling and right doing. It was no gospel of unreason which Jesus Christ preached to the world, but one which corresponds with the needs of the awakened human mind and spirit. That 'the Christian faith is the perfection of intelligence' was Coleridge's motto. God is Light, and it is the enlightened and loving mind which can best enter into communion with Him.

¶ Cardinal Newman was so afraid of 'the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries' that he placed the safe-guard of faith in 'a right state of heart,' and refused to trust his mind to think its way through to God. Martineau justly complained that 'his certainties are on the surface, and his uncertainties below.' We are only safe as believers when, besides keeping the heart clean, we

> press bold to the tether's end
> Allotted to this life's intelligence.[1]

(4) It is not enough that we have fervent feelings, devout aspirations and experiences, and true and clear thoughts of God. Great as all these are, they do not cover the whole of religion, the whole of the love of God. Our affections and thoughts need to be carried into action and to be manifested in a life of obedience and service. So the commandment bids us love God with all our *strength*, with the concentrated force of the will behind every spiritual desire and thought. Our religion, to be true to the pattern shown on the Mount, must also be a practical power—a power making for goodness in the life. That which tests all the rest is just the practice of religion—the passion to be like that which we worship, the passion to do the will of Him whom we love, the passion of fidelity to the highest right in all the relations and engagements of life. What of good the heart and soul have felt and known, and what of truth the mind has seen, must be put into word and deed, into conduct and character. The spirit which quickens our hours of finest feeling, highest thought, and holiest experience must penetrate every part of our life, and

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 25.

[1] *Ibid.*, 29.

govern and guide every detail of daily interest and duty.

¶ Ideal love dwells not in the soul alone, but in every vein and nerve and muscle of a frame strung to perfect service.[1]

¶ To Abraham Lincoln the two great commandments of Christ stood for the principles and practices of the perfect life. When Carpenter, the artist who painted his portrait in the White House, asked him about his religion, Lincoln replied: 'I have never joined any church, but when any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the words of the Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself," that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.' All churches inscribe these words over their altars, but they inscribe so many other things that the gem is lost in the setting.[2]

¶ John Wesley once wrote, when asked to say what he meant by the attainment of perfection in this life: 'I never meant anything more than loving God with all our heart, and serving Him with all our strength.' But what in all the demands of religion is so difficult to reach and so hard to satisfy? It represents the heights of human experience and attainment.[3]

Are we not obliged to admit that our obedience and fellowship are not what we would have them? Our limitations are many. We shall always have to make the effort of attention and spiritual concentration in order to realize our Father's love or to talk with Him, as it were, face to face. We shall always have to fight a good fight of faith, and our daily attainments in this field, taken one by one, may seem insignificant. Yet in the long run they serve to bind us up with God in thought and purpose.

The builder who first bridged Niagara's gorge,
Before he swung his cable, shore to shore,
Sent out across the gulf his venturing kite
Bearing a slender cord for unseen hands
To grasp upon the further cliff and draw
A greater cord, and then a greater yet,
Till at the last across the chasm swung
The cable—then the mighty bridge in air!

So we may send our little timid thought
Across the void, out to God's reaching hands—
Send out our love and faith to thread the deep—
Thought after thought until the little cord
Has greatened to a chain no chance can break,
And—we are anchored to the Infinite![1]

[1] George Gissing.
[2] J. F. Newton, *The Sword of the Spirit*, 35.
[3] John Hunter, *God and Life*, 37.

The Dedication of the Mind

Mark xii. 30.—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind.'

In Deuteronomy the text reads, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' How comes it, then, that Mark and Luke, when quoting this passage, insert among these three phrases, a fourth—namely, 'and with all thy mind'? To the Hebrew scholar there is no difficulty whatever here. He recognizes that the two phrases in Mark and Luke—namely, 'with all thy heart' and 'with all thy mind'—are simply two independent and alternative renderings of one and the same Hebrew phrase in Deuteronomy. 'With all thy heart' reproduces the Hebrew word for word, but the meaning is not clear, as the Hebrew word for 'heart' includes the idea of such mental faculties as thought and reason, which neither the Greek equivalent for heart nor the English word does. To the Hebrews a heartless man was a brainless man. So the addition of the alternative rendering 'with all thy mind' gives the full meaning of the text.

1. The first truth we are concerned with is that the powers of our mind have to be put into our religion. That may seem to be obvious, but if it were complied with, it would revolutionize Christianity, it would overturn half the religious organization of the world at the present time. If it were thought that to gain goodness needed as definite, as prolonged, and as concentrated an effort as to gain a seat in Parliament or to obtain a degree, a condition of consternation would be produced such as so-called religious circles have seldom seen. To how many is religion simply the affair of a morning moment, of a sudden spiritual inspiration, of

A prayer and an unctuous smile
And a hurried request to prosper
Another six days of guile?

[1] Edwin Markham.

Yet a dumb, blind love of God, in which the mind has no part, means a starved life, a shrivelled soul. The soul needs its hard, daily, mental discipline as greatly as our brains do. The amount of good our life brings to other people depends of course on sympathy and experience, but it also depends on the extent to which our mind has contributed to our sum total of worth by its meditation, its vision, its discipline. Only a few years ago the Dean of St Paul's told us that in his judgment 'no nation has ever gone so far as England in its neglect and contempt for the intellect.' To hear some people, good, kind-hearted, well-meaning people, talk, one would be inclined to think that our intellectual powers are in opposition to our spiritual, and that the mind is something purely secular.

¶ One of the noblest missionaries of the Christian Church, David Brainerd, once wrote to his brother, 'Never encourage heat without light.' Yet is not that just what some people do? As experience comes unceasingly towards them, they use a Crookes Glass which cuts off all the light rays and allows only the heat to pass through. Religion to them means working up their spirits into an emotional fever, and anything meantime that savours of inquiry, anything which is an exercise of the divine faculty of reason, is vetoed as impious. The world they live in is like a photographer's developing room, suffused with a warm red glow but with no light.[1]

¶ It is a miracle of stupidity that men have thought that God was honoured when they sterilized their reason. You remember that Ferishtah's camel determined to save its master the expense of its provender; therefore it refused to eat. Whereupon the camel most incontinently fell exhausted. Robbers plundered its load, and its bones were picked by jackals. And are we to imagine that the man who starves his mind becomes the more efficient servant of his Creator? [2]

As we go through life we seldom find contented ignorance and a high type of goodness in close association. 'I distrusted that man because he was so ignorant and self-satisfied' is the expression of a just instinct. True religion is based on true thinking. It will not parade learning; but ignorance, and that which the old Hebrew thinker held to be better than the sapphire, the onyx, the topaz, and the ruby, can have nothing in common. To love God with all the mind is to have the desire strong and prevailing to escape from all ignorant and erroneous ideas and expectations regarding Him, to know better and better every day His character, His thoughts, His judgments, His will; it is to have the passion for truth—truth in worship, truth in creed, truth in profession, truth in life.

2. This brings us to the further stage, that the mind has its rights in religion. '*E pur si muove*' is the protest, not simply of a great Italian scientist, but of the whole human race when retarded in its upward struggle towards light and God.

Consider the ever enlarging range of human intelligence; how the mystery of one age becomes the knowledge of another, and the mind strengthens by all the truth which it apprehends. Consider, too, the wide field which allures the mind to search into it, and the nobler thoughts of God which are the result of honest intellectual endeavour. Are all these things temptations to be resisted? only intended to baffle and delude us? It would wrong the excellence of God thus to imagine. The mind that was given by God was certainly not given to be repressed, to be crushed, to be etiolated. No order of religion can ever be deemed complete which does not leave room for the fullest possible advance and development of the intellect. This is our plaint against, for instance, the teaching of Muhammad, held though it is by over one-seventh of the population of the globe. It is our plaint, too, against forms of religion which touch us far more nearly than does Muhammadanism. As a general rule, if any creed or faith directs our attention in the main to the petty, the unthought-out, or if it prefers a restricted, a cabined, a confined truth to Truth which is broader based than time, and which ever contains in itself not only the grandeur but also the far-sweeping view of the great mountains, suspect it.

¶ It was during the materialistic period which followed the restoration of Louis XVIII. in France that Lamennais preached with great eloquence the rights of the mind in religion. He saw that his country was perishing for lack

[1] Kennedy Williamson, *The Shining Traffic*, 181.
[2] B. J. Snell.

of faith, and that what she needed was health, thought, mental virility. For a time all went well. Then the net began to be drawn tight about him. In 1832 the Pope launched an Encyclical against him. His friends, Lacordaire, the preacher, Montalembert, the historian, left him, but he never gave in; and in the end he was buried in Père la Chaise in a pauper's grave, unchrismed by even so much as a cross.

Do we feel that this leaves small scope for the unlettered to enter the Kingdom? Not so. Christ never said the uneducated could not get into the Kingdom: in that association of followers in His blest footsteps there has ever been room for all who come. But education is not, and never has been, a thing of universities only. As Henry Ford says in his Autobiography: 'Merely gaining knowledge may become the most useless work a man can do. What can you do to help and heal the world? that is the educational test.' There are unlearned men who in truth, purity, and goodness reflect wondrously the life of Christ, and in their humility enjoy the unbroken sunshine of His Presence. And yet none the less their ignorance detracts inevitably from their sainthood. Faith, if it is living, is ever advancing in its ideals, spiritual, moral and intellectual. If it strives to be true to these, it is ever adventuring into the unknown and making this unknown henceforth in some measure part and parcel of its own possessions. The ignorant Saint, moreover, is not always a humble Saint. Indeed, only too often dogmatism and intolerance follow closely in the wake of ignorance. To those minds, therefore, learning and knowledge are helpful. For learning enables a man to get outside his own limited experience; it supplies him with ethical and spiritual standards transcending his highest attainment.

¶ St Teresa, whose robust commonsense was quick to discern the very unchildlike characteristics of middle-aged childishness, castigates it with her accustomed trenchancy. 'Let no one be taken into this religious house of ours,' she writes, 'unless she is a woman of a sound understanding. For if she is without mind, she will neither know herself nor will she understand her best teachers. Ignorance and self-deceit is a disease that is simply incurable, and, besides, it usually carries great malice and great malignity along with it. Commend me to people with good heads. From all silly devotees may God deliver us!'[1]

3. We must emphasize the fact that 'the mind only occupies its right place in religion when it becomes a part of our love to God.' Probably the most remarkable feature of the educational history of our country during the last fifty years has been the way we have come to see that mind and love to God, brains and character are inseparable. Can the mind love? we ask. Surely we love with our affections? That is true, but it is only a part of the truth. If our highest thoughts do not approve the objects of our love, there will come a day of sad awakening and disillusionment. To be complete our love must come from our intellect as well as from our heart, and unless our thoughts are converted to His will and purpose and standards love to our Lord is imperfect and insufficient.

¶ We call to mind the young shoemaker, William Carey, who loved God. His affections were so stirred by the unspeakable mercy of the Cross that he triumphed over much opposition and went out to India as a missionary. Yet had that been all, the entire history of modern missions would have been different. 'With all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength' were not enough. His mind must have its rights and its share. The cobbler's assistant began to study; he had a kingly intellect. In a few years' time he was acknowledged to be the greatest living student of the Bengali language. He became a member of half the learned societies of Europe, and Professor in Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi in the Fort William College; and before he died he had a hand and a leading part in translating the Bible, or parts of it, into no fewer than forty different languages. No sweeter, richer, saintlier character than that of Carey can one desire to meet. But its whole impact upon us is conditioned by the fact that his love for his Master was a virile, purposeful intelligence, wholly subservient to his Lord, which made his life so influential and so great.[2]

[1] E. Herman, *The Touch of God*, 33.
[2] S. H. Moore.

Love Thy Fellow-Man

Mark xii. 31.—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

The originality of Christianity consists not so much in introducing new ideas into the religious thought of mankind as in interpreting, purifying, widening, deepening, realizing those that are already there—filling them with new meaning and power. This precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' is not specifically Christian. As we know, it is a quotation from the Book of Leviticus, and we wonder how much it meant to the people for whose benefit it was originally incorporated in their law. We wonder if the man in whose brain God first inspired the idea ever saw himself how much it contained. Probably not; we have not done so even yet, and never would but for the light which Christ has shed upon it—the new inspiration which He breathed into the words 'God' and 'man.'

The spiritual penetration displayed in the framing of this commandment is astonishing when we think of the crude type of society to which it was first given, and how much still remains to be done before the moral consciousness of humanity is fully equal to what it enjoins. And this is so because in the first place it assumes that obedience to such a commandment is possible, that the power of loving is sufficiently within the control of the will to render such a commandment not unreasonable. Secondly, because of the perception of the identity of interest between us and our neighbours; in fact, we are the sharers of a common life; we cannot arrive at perfect self-realization, enter into our full spiritual inheritance, without our neighbour, or he without us. Thirdly, because of the wise moderation of the requirement. We are to love our neighbour *as* ourselves, not instead of ourselves. It is not an exhortation to unlimited altruism, it is far too profound for that. For these three reasons, if for no other, we might affirm that this is one of the greatest sayings in all religious literature.

1. First, then, Is it possible for any human being to obey a commandment to love? Has the will much to do with the affections? Some people would at once reply with a direct negative.

> How is it under our control
> To love or not to love?

says Robert Browning. But this is true only of that strange elemental force known as sexual attraction, and even then the statement ought to be qualified. The love we bear our relatives and friends is very largely a matter of association. The proverb that blood is thicker than water has a certain measure of truth in it, too; there are some psychological affinities, spontaneous yearnings of heart to heart, which may be traced to the influence of a common ancestral stock; though, on the other hand, it has to be admitted that there are often violent temperamental antagonisms between persons nearly related by blood, and the closest instinctive mutual regard between souls of different races and widely separated social grades. We all know of friendships of this kind, and they are not to be explained on any theory except that of some powerful psychological sympathy which eludes analysis by the understanding.

But these are not what the text refers to at all. It is love as benevolence that is meant, goodwill to all with whom we have to do. The very term goodwill exactly expresses it, and shows that it is much more than a matter of native disposition; it is a matter of deliberate resolve. Apart from all question of the particularistic relationships of life, we are here bidden to wish well and act well to every soul with whom we have any dealings; we are to love our fellow-men. Is it in our power to love in this way? To be sure it is. We can think kindly of people in general, or we can do the reverse; we can be spiteful, mean and censorious, selfish and grasping in our dealings with our fellows, or we can be magnanimous, openhearted, full of brotherly kindness, and of willingness to help. We can be whichever we choose, but we know which is of Christ.

It is obvious that He would make it the most distinctive trait in the character of His disciples, and that, just in proportion as one is a follower of Jesus, he is bound to be a man of deep human sympathies. It is not enough to be a man of clean life, honourable reputation, and reverent spirit—or even of correct views. There have been many such who in social relations were cold as ice. If anyone is to hear the

words of Jesus and do them, there must needs be a spring of love in his heart that will make him a friend of men and a helper of those in trouble.[1]

¶ 'Let us be kind to one another,' Ian Maclaren used to say, 'for most of us are fighting a hard battle.' And years afterwards, when I succeeded to a charge once his, I found how bonnily he had lived out his dictum; heard nothing of his sermons, though he was a mighty preacher; but, wherever there had been a bairnie ill in his time, twenty years after they remembered in these homes the man who spent long hours pouring out wonderful stories to hot restless little folk, too ill to look at pictures, sick of all their toys, or peevish and fretted by their crumby beds.[2]

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs.

2. The exhortation is to love your neighbour as though he were yourself. But that is just what he is—in a sense there is no gainsaying. All the strife and misery in the world arising from human selfishness, all man's inhumanity to man, all suspicion, hate and ill-will between man and man, class and class, nation and nation, is only failure to realize this simple truth. 'No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself,' let him try never so hard. You realize yourself in your neighbour; you come into possession of yourself through your intercourse with other human beings. It is madness to suppose that the true interests of any man or any body of men are opposed to those of others; that is the wretched lie that is keeping the world in chains; our fetters will drop off as soon as it is universally seen to be a lie. 'We are members one of another,' and the more fully we know it the more abundant is the life we live.

¶ 'Your neighbour,' says Professor G. G. A. Murray in his *Euripides*, 'is so vivid an element in life that, unless you do love him, he will spoil all the rest.'

¶ Never to the overbearing and underbred are we tempted to betray our dearest secrets. That is why the cad, the bounder, the bully, the mistrustful wiseacre and the self-assertive superman shove or slink through life without tasting it; all their contacts are one-sided; a man with hooks at the end of his arms can sometimes catch you by the ankle and bring you down, but never can he know the thousand curious thrills of giving a caress, or taking the pressure of a hand.[1]

3. You are to love your neighbour as yourself, so apparently there is a sense in which you are expected to love yourself too. Is that so? Why did not the commandment run, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and not thyself'? Well, just because that would not have been so great a counsel. In these days we are often told that self-love is the root of most of our woes, and that if we could get rid of it all would be well with mankind. But that is not the case. It is not self-love, rightly understood, but selfishness, that is the cause of most of the ills under which we groan. But when we see a man with a fine personal dignity which has nothing of arrogance or vanity about it, and is entirely consistent with true modesty and humility and an earnest desire to serve the common weal, do we not admire it? Was there ever greater dignity than that of our Lord Christ Jesus Himself, a dignity of which men stood in awe, and yet which was united to a simplicity and gentleness unsurpassable? The highest kind of character requires a proper self-regard. One's own selfhood is a Divine treasure, a gift from God for the right use of which He will hold us responsible.

¶ An old Edinburgh weaver used habitually to pray, 'O God, help me to hold a high opinion of myself.' One imagines behind that Scotsman's life such a home as Burns described in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' where the profound meanings of religion and right living were bred into the very marrow of the children. And this was the practical issue in the weaver's case—he felt in his life things too valuable to be misused, too fine to be profaned, and, remembering them, he held a high opinion of himself.[2]

Pure undiluted altruism is not enough as a moral ideal. There is a duty of self-formation too, and without the proper observance of that duty all our self-giving is of little worth. If

[1] H. Kingman, *Building on Rock*, 37.
[2] A. J. Gossip.

[1] J. S. Whale, in *The Purpose of God in the Life of the World*, 180.
[2] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 37.

your soul is of infinite value to your Creator, you have no business to treat it lightly; it is yours to care for, yours to cultivate and train to His honour and glory and the good of all mankind. Before we can benefit the race we must have something to benefit it with, and that we never will have unless by the living energy of God's love we bring every faculty into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We must have a living participation in His spirit and so have a share in His life-work—that life-work of loving helpfulness which brought an infinite compassion to bear on human sin and need and sorrow.

The command to love God comes first by an obvious necessity. It calls a man to know himself and honour himself and learn to love himself, in purity and self-mastery and righteousness, as one whom God loves, and then, living as a son of God, to love his neighbour as himself. Such a love for one's neighbour would indeed go far to make this world a comfortable home. And He calls us to commend this love by our lives. It is often through the human beings who are nearest us that we see the love of God. When Samuel heard the voice of God he thought it was the voice of his best friend. He said to his old friend Eli, 'You called me.' But it was God who had called him, though it sounded like the voice of his friend.

¶ There is a touching little Irish story about a woman who was in great distress of mind because she had lost the sense of God. She said, 'Why doesn't He make me feel that He is there? If I could only feel Him, know that He had touched me!' And an old woman who was sitting with her said, 'Pray to Him. Ask Him to touch you. He will put His hand on you.' She began to pray in agony, and suddenly felt the hand of God touching her. She cried out, 'He has touched me!' and went into an ecstasy of joy. Then she said, 'But do you know, it felt just like your hand?' And the old woman said, 'Why, it was my hand.' 'It was your hand?' 'Sure, what did you think God would be doing? Did you think He would make a long arm out of heaven to touch you? *He just took the hand that was nearest and used that.*'[1]

[1] A. Maude Royden, *The Friendship of God*, 123.

Not far from the Kingdom

Mark xii. 34.—'And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

'Not far from the kingdom of God.' Was that a satisfactory position, or was it not? There is a conventional way of looking at it which is mainly occupied with the unsatisfactoriness of it. 'Not far from it: not *in* it. The man might just as well be miles away.' That is a very common way of looking at the position. But it is not Christ's way. He says this of the young lawyer with a feeling of genuine respect and admiration for him. There was a candour, an honesty, a spirituality of temper about him that quite won the Lord's heart. He had the qualities of a good disciple in him, and it was by way of praise and in the hope that the scribe might take the final step that our Lord said to him, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

If Christians are to learn to appreciate aright a hundred characters, and views, and movements that do not exactly correspond with their own, they must take notice of Christ's attitude when He said this.

¶ The virtues of the pagans, said Augustine, were nothing but splendid vices. Now, nothing can be more remote from the manner of Christ than that. Virtue was virtue to Christ, goodness was goodness to Christ, wherever He found it. And wherever He found it the sight of it gladdened His heart. Goodness was to Him just the sign of the presence of God, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Instead of denouncing the high and splendid qualities of men like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius as being 'splendid vices,' He would have rejoiced in them and would have said to each of them as He said to this scribe, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

1. What is the Kingdom of God? The phrase is hardly ever out of Christ's mouth. He is always talking about the Kingdom—inviting men to claim its citizenship, to share its privileges, to shoulder its obligations. Now He is describing its lowly origin—now picturing its silent but steady growth—now depicting its inevitable and ultimate triumph. It was for the Kingdom of God He lived. It was for the Kingdom of God He died. It is for the realization of that Kingdom that all the redeeming energies of

His risen life are being given so freely to-day. What do we mean by the Kingdom of God? 'I would paraphrase it,' says Dr Herbert Gray, 'as "a new social order based on God," or "a new type of civilization centred in God."' 'The Kingdom of God,' says Principal Clow, 'is the rule and realm of God in the hearts and lives of men.' As definitions these may be inadequate. Taken together they may give us some idea of the range and scope of Christ's Kingdom. When the laws of God become the laws of man, when the love of God has become the universal rule of common life, when the Father's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven, when the nations of the world have claimed their place in the great family of the redeemed and entered into the full enjoyment of their inheritance in Christ—when they have learned to find in the discharge of every obligation and in the rendering of their fullest service that happiness and that harmony which are the ultimate goal of all human desire and endeavour—then the Kingdom of God will have come in power. That time is not yet. But there is a sense in which the Kingdom of God has already come. It is here in embryo at least—here in promise if not in power—here wherever there are men living in conscious fellowship with God—loving their fellows, striving to serve them, seeking to relate their time and their talents to the universal purpose of Christ, finding in Him at once the source of their strength and the secret of their joy.

2. 'Not far from it.' Then some men are far from the Kingdom? Yes, there are many of whom it can be said without any want of charity that they are a long way from the Kingdom of God. They never name the name of Christ except in oath or blasphemy. They never kneel in prayer. They have no use at all for the Bible. Their minds and hearts are occupied wholly with other things. Their pleasures are found in other and very different places. Sometimes they are actively hostile, more often they are quite indifferent, but in mind and sympathy and purpose they are far from the Kingdom of God.

And some men are in the Kingdom. That inference is equally clear. They have heard the voice of Christ, and seen the vision of need. They have marked His teaching and given heed to His invitation. They have come in all their weakness and failure, and all their promise of better things; they have come with their hopes and fears, their aspirations and their strivings, with their hunger for something better and bigger than they know, and in Christ they have found their real life. The challenge of His Kingdom they have heard and accepted—its citizenship they have claimed, its rights and privileges they are now enjoying, its obligations they are endeavouring to discharge, and to its service they are giving their lives.

Our Lord, however, in the text reminds us of a third class, whose relation to the Kingdom is more indefinite and perplexing—they are 'not far from' it. They stand on the borderland of the Kingdom; their mood is sympathetic, their attitude expectant; they have tender susceptibilities, sincere desires, and an affinity of soul for all things holy and good that constitutes them almost Christian. They are like the trees of spring bursting here and there into green shoot and pink blossom, and only waiting for a sunny hour or a sprinkle of rain to put on the fullness of beauty.

3. Let us note, then, some of the signs that this scribe was not far from the Kingdom.

(1) In the first place, and in a general sense, this is true as a plain fact of history. This scribe was a Jew, trained in the Jewish faith, familiar with the doctrine of the Kingdom. He lived in Palestine at the very time when Jesus Christ was there. Often would he have seen Him in the streets, often would he have listened to Him talking; and no man could be so near the King without being near the gateway of the Kingdom. He was not an African, like Simon of Cyrene, with an ocean between his home and that of Jesus. He was not, like Lydia, a European, born in another continent from Christ. He lived within a stone's-throw of the Master; he studied the very books the Master loved; and doubtless among the followers of Jesus were some whom he would call his friends.

Are not the same things true of us? By birth and upbringing and Christian nurture none of us is far from the Kingdom. It is near us whenever we hear the gospel. It is near us in every Christian character. The influences of the Kingdom are all around us. In the Providence of God we have been born in a land where there is an open Bible and a Christian Church; and it may have come even nearer us than that—in a mother who was a saint of God, or a father who was an exemplary Christian.

And, therefore, however foolish or prayerless or unclean we may have been, if we want to return we have not far to travel.

O mother, that from thy pure heart each night
Sendest up prayers for me to highest God :
For me, who wander without fixèd light
And have not faith to tread where thou hast trod :
Grieve not, though God no answer yet has given ;
He knows that mine is not a lasting doom,
Though thou be caught up into highest heaven,
And I be banished into outer gloom.
For then the aching absence of thy face
Shall work in me such swift immortal pain,
That I shall struggle through the world of space
In burning hope to be with thee again :
And I shall strive for thy white purity,
For fear of everlasting losing thee.[1]

(2) Again, this scribe was not far from the Kingdom because he had a great admiration for the Lord. Probably he had listened to Christ before, and had been deeply stirred by what he heard. Dissatisfied with all his weary studies, there was that in Christ which made him dream of peace. But now, as he heard the discussion with the Sadducees, and saw Christ's masterly handling of these sceptics, all other feelings, dim and ill-defined, gave place to a great and glowing admiration. Had he been a little man his spite would have rejoiced to see his rivals, the Sadducees, confuted. Had he been a blind and bitter pedant of the schools, he would have been angry at any triumph of the Carpenter. But there was something noble in this scribe, something that lifted him above all petty feeling; he felt he was in the presence of a Master, and was filled with warm and lively admiration. Now whenever a man feels that, he is not far from the Kingdom. It is true we are not saved by admiring Jesus Christ. We are saved by loving Him and serving Him. It takes something mightier than admiration to pierce to the very deeps of a man's being. But admiration is so akin to love, and is so truly its herald and its harbinger, that if anyone truly and morally admires Christ, he is not far from the Kingdom.

(3) And again, this scribe was very near the Kingdom because he was intellectually convinced that Christ was right. With perfect frankness, and with full sincerity, he admitted that what Jesus said was truth. Nothing would have been easier for him than to challenge Jesus' answer to his question. It was a matter of endless debate among the scribes which was really the great commandment. And had he been seeking what so many seek in argument—not truth, but a dialectic triumph—he could easily have summoned his scholastic learning. But the scribe was not a disputer of this world ; he was a genuine searcher for the truth. Weary with all his study of the law, he longed for a ray of light upon his darkness. And when he welcomed the doctrine of the Christ, and said, 'Well, master, thou hast spoken truth,' Christ recognized what was implied in that, and said, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' If he had let the words sink down into his heart, that moment he would have been within it.

¶ Dr Johnson was accustomed to say, 'If a man thinks deeply he thinks religiously' ; and deeply pondering the problems of nature, life, and duty, men have often found themselves brought to His feet who spake as never man spake.

¶ Men are seeking to-day. And as Cromwell said to his daughter, 'To be a seeker is to be of the next best sect to being a finder, and such shall every honest seeker be in the end.' So, instead of being disheartened because so few make the open profession, let us take heart from the spirit of earnest seeking that is abroad. 'For he that seeketh,' said our Lord, 'findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.'

(4) And then, lastly, the scribe was near the Kingdom because he was deeply stirred by Jesus' answer. Emotionally as well as intellectually he was very deeply impressed by Jesus Christ. It was a dangerous thing to acknowledge Jesus Christ, and the scribe would never have done it in cold blood. To admit in public thus that Christ was right was to expose himself to bitterest suspicion. And then the words that followed his confession are so torrent-like, and so intense, and so aglow, that we feel through them the excitement of the speaker, and realize how deeply he was moved. There is no sign that his conscience had been touched ; there is every sign that his feelings had been touched. The crust of formalism had been broken through—he was no longer the cold and dry scholastic. And it was then, when he was so impressed—so ready for great action and decision—that Jesus,

[1] Stephen Phillips.

looking at him, said, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

It is not by what we feel that we are saved. It is the height of folly for one to trust his feelings when the Bible calls on him to trust his Saviour. It takes more than emotion, as it takes more than intellect, to enter the glad Kingdom of the Lord. But what we ought to realize is the value of our seasons of emotion in sweeping us forward to a great decision in a way that argument can rarely do. Let us seize these hours, and seal them at once in personal decision; we are never so near the Kingdom as just then. There are times when a single step makes all the difference, as when a man is standing on the quay. One step, and he is on board the ocean vessel that will carry him over the deeps to other countries. But let him stand inactive, and all the feeling of which the heart is capable will not prevent his return to the old life, there to be haunted by a dull regret.

¶ Amiel writes, 'That which is not finished is nothing'; and whilst the saying is true as applied to many things, it is chiefly true concerning a soul in the close neighbourhood of salvation. The penitence that is not carried through to conversion is nothing.

¶ Scientists affirm that copper is simply aboriginal elemental matter that was on the way to become gold, but it got shunted on the wrong track and stopped just short of the splendid consummation. How much that just stopping short meant! Yet who can measure the distance between the baser metal of unregenerate nature at its best and the transformed and transfigured character which is the fine gold of the sanctuary![1]

4. We do not know anything further about this scribe. Did he take the decisive step and cast in his lot with Christ, and bear his own clear and unmistakable witness that to obey is better than sacrifice? Or did he smother his conscience and retain his place? For it is one thing to see the truth, and it is quite another thing to obey it.

¶ Lord Acton was a Roman Catholic, but a Roman Catholic with a passion for liberty and truth. The possibility of the promulgation of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope outraged him. He fought against it with every ounce of strength he possessed and with every weapon on which he could lay his hands. He pulled every wire to get the hateful doctrine rejected. He characterized it as a crime and a sin. But when the doctrine was ultimately decreed to be the faith of the Catholic Church, Acton, instead of coming out as many did, managed somehow or other to square his conscience and remain in.

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Bane and the Antidote*, 33.

The Friend of the Common People

Mark xii. 37.—'And the common people heard him gladly.'

1. This phrase 'the common people' is not intended quite so much as in our ordinary use of it to denote what we call the lower classes of society as distinguished from the upper classes. There is undoubtedly a distinction intended between different classes in the community, but the distinction is not exactly such as we should mean were we to employ the same phrase. The contrast is not so much between the so-called higher and the so-called lower classes, as between the ecclesiastical and the non-ecclesiastical sections of the population. The Scribes and Pharisees would not listen, would not believe, would not follow; but the people, the people at large, listened with eagerness and interest to the words which proceeded out of the mouth of Christ. Though the translation may not be absolutely exact, it does practically include those to whom the term is now applied. The multitude, the masses, hung upon the words of Christ; they found in Him one whom they could admire and trust; they sided with Him for the time being against the official leaders and guides who were becoming more and more hostile to Him.

During His lifetime it was quite the exception when anyone of high position professed himself a convert, ready to brave the hostile opinion of his class and to recognize in Jesus a teacher sent from God. The record of the Evangelists is the record of One who met with continual opposition and obloquy, whose brief periods of welcome here and there were followed by demonstrations of animosity. Yet all along, if we look more closely, we see that the people, when left to themselves, were inclined to favour Him, gave heed to what He had to say, asked if this were not 'He who should come,' were ready at times to proclaim Him as King, and to take up arms

in support of His claims. He was in the strictest sense a popular teacher and leader. We are so accustomed to think of Him as despised and rejected, as meeting with misunderstanding and hatred, that we are surprised on examination to observe how great was the enthusiasm, how widely spread at times was the enthusiasm, on His behalf. Everywhere there was on the part of the people, so long as their minds were not poisoned by suspicions instilled into them by others, a desire to know what He would say, to get Him to speak on subjects pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

2. It was in His sincerity, in His reality, in His freedom from self-seeking that His power lay. He spoke simply of things that came within the knowledge of the people. Even while He unfolded the laws and principles of the Heavenly Kingdom, He opened the eyes of His hearers to read the lessons of the world around them, to behold illustrations of Divine care and goodness and wisdom everywhere. He made men look into their own hearts and learn that these may be purified in the rendering of acceptable service to God. He reversed the ordinary judgments of men; and taught the lesson that what was highly esteemed among men might be hateful in the sight of God; that the first might be last and the last might be first. He showed that the holiest ordinances were but means to ends, tithes and sacrifices were as nothing in comparison with judgment, mercy, and truth, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. He undoubtedly ran counter to the prevalent code of religion. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber because He came eating and drinking. He was declared not to be of God because He did not keep the Sabbath. There might be in this apparent rebellion against authority something to enlist the favour of the irreligious and outcast, but this was not the explanation of the genuine love which He called forth, of the reverence and gratitude and devotion with which the people gave themselves to Him. His power lay in His unselfishness, in His sympathy. He knew the people; He bore their wants upon His heart; He sought to win them for their own good. Wherever He went He carried blessing; He was ready with counsel and with help. He understood the struggles and temptations of those whose natures He shared; He was touched with a feeling of their infirmities, and they could ask His aid in the assurance that He would not repulse them. This it was which of old in reality drew people to Him, and this it is which must draw them still.

¶ Every believer realizes by experience that Christ is the only perfect sympathizer. 'I'm not perfectly understood,' says everybody in fact. But if you are a believer you are perfectly understood. Christ is the only one who never expects you to be other than *yourself*, and He puts in abeyance towards you all but what is like you. He takes your view of things, and mentions no other. He takes the old woman's view of things by the wash-tub, and has a great interest in wash powder; Sir Isaac Newton's view of things, and wings among the stars with him; the artist's view, and feeds among the lilies; the lawyer's, and shares the justice of things. But He never plays the lawyer or the philosopher or the artist to the old woman. He is above that littleness.[1]

3. We hear it said to-day that the common people are hearing Him gladly no more, that His reign over them is at an end, that it is among the conventional, the artificial, the respectable that His followers are now to be found, while the masses are estranged from Him. If this is so, it must be because of gross misunderstanding of His aims. There have in various ages been great popular upheavals against His name, against His supposed sway. The French Revolution was in some respects ostensibly a repudiation of Christ and of the Father whom Christ revealed. His religion was denounced as the engine of tyranny and oppression, and in overthrowing it men imagined that they were overthrowing their deadliest foe. We know how foolish was that imagination. We know that the evils of which they complained were in no sense identical with the Christianity of Christ; that in the prevailing of His teaching, in the triumph of the principles which He had inculcated, they would have found the very blessing for which they craved most earnestly. And we may be sure that, if at any time the people as a people are found rejecting Him, it is through ignorance and misapprehension. If there be any class to whom the gospel should come with peculiar endearing authority, it is to the working men of this toilsome world. The clerical world, the religious world, the intellectual

[1] *Letters of James Smetham.*

world—these may all more readily be expected to be contrary to Him; but the working and labouring—these are the very disciples, now as formerly, who ought to hail Him as their friend and to hear Him gladly. We may take the liberty of doubting whether there is such determined estrangement from the Church of Christ on the part of the people as is sometimes argued. We may still further declare that even if, for various causes, good or bad, they have, in some measure, become estranged from the outward organization of the Church, they are not of necessity estranged from Christ Himself, that His voice, when they hear it, still speaks to them with authority and with charm.

¶ A party of strikers was being addressed by Mr Ben Tillett, the well-known English labour leader. He was explaining their attitude toward religion, and he said: 'Our criticisms are not directed against the Christ of the Churches but against the Churches of the Christ. If you ask me what we think about the Carpenter of Nazareth, I shall answer you in the language of your Book: He is to us "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely."'

That utterance was followed by a second of breathless silence, broken at first by something like a sob. And then followed a deep and passionate cheer.[1]

¶ One who was passing through one of the public parks in Glasgow during a General Election, when passions were running high, was attracted by the sight of an elderly man, surrounded by a group of unemployed as shabby and shelterless as himself. They were crowding around him as he read something aloud to them, and were drinking in the message with hungry, eager eyes. The observer walked slowly by, curious to catch, if possible, some drift of the subject which was thus strong to hold their rapt attention, and half expecting to overhear some Communist diatribe or even seditious propaganda. The words which were caught as the passer-by went on unheeded were these, 'Jesus Christ, the eternal Saviour.'[2]

4. What we have to do when the danger of any general alienation from the Church is brought to our notice is not so much to argue with the seeming deserters, to denounce them, to impute bad motives to them, as to see what causes in ourselves, and in the Church as it exists among ourselves, have led to the alienation. The first thing to do is to ask how far we are manifesting Christ's aims, how far the body of Christ is pervaded by Christ's spirit. To be in the world as He was in the world, this is what we, as individual members of His body, must be; this is what the Church at large must be if the heart of humanity is to be won, or can be expected to respond to the truth which we declare. That truth does not, indeed, depend on its acceptance or rejection by any class, however learned or however numerous. That truth it is ours to declare, whether men hear it or whether they will not. There are evils amongst us which stumble men, which warp them, which will not suffer them to listen to the real accents of Christ. There is in one class, it may be, a keen pursuit of gain, an eager competition to amass a fortune, to acquire a position. There is in another class, it may be, an addiction to the coarser vices, a drunkenness, an intemperance, a heedlessness of the comfort and happiness of others, so long as this debasing craving is gratified. Such men in any rank cannot hear the voice of Christ aright. Within us all there is something to condemn. Let us hear Him ourselves, in the first place, whether He encourages or rebukes. Some of those who heard Him gladly long ago were, no doubt, amongst those who turned their backs upon Him afterwards; some of those who cried 'Hosanna' might be amongst those who afterwards cried, 'Crucify him; away with him.' Let us see to it that if at any time we hear Him gladly we may not be of those who hear gladly only for a time, and the word takes no deep root in our hearts, but is destroyed by the circumstances of daily life, that so we may be not only hearers but doers of His word; and so, being in the world as He was in the world, we may humbly hope and trust that in God's good time the world will be won to Him.

¶ Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, a prominent Hindu judge, gave an address at Bombay, entitled 'The Kingdom of Christ and the Spirit of the Age,' in which he said: 'Let me tell you what I consider the greatest miracle of the present day: it is this, that to this great country, with its 300 millions of people, there should come from a little island, unknown by name even to our forefathers, many thousand miles distant from our shores and with a population of but fifty to

[1] D. B. Knox, *The Haunted Heart*, 147.
[2] Hubert L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 33.

sixty millions, a message so full of spiritual life and strength as the gospel of Christ. This surely is a miracle if ever there was one. And this message has not only come, but it is finding a response in our hearts, for, as I have already indicated to you, the old conception of a spiritual worship of God has not entirely perished from the minds of the people, though it may be buried below a mass of ceremony and superstition. The process of the conversion of India to Christ may not be going on as rapidly as you hope, or in exactly the manner that you hope, but nevertheless I say that India is being converted; the ideals that lie at the heart of the gospel of Christ are slowly but surely permeating every part of Hindu society and modifying every phase of Hindu thought. And this process must go on as long as those who preach this gospel seek above all things to commend it, not so much by what they say, but by what they do and the way they live.'

Sacrificial Giving

Mark xii. 41.—'And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury.'

1. Our Lord was at Jerusalem in the Temple. Somewhere, perhaps at the top of the flight of steps which led from the terrace or platform below to the Beautiful Gate, He was sitting in full view of the Court of the Women. In that Court stood as many as thirteen different alms-boxes, shaped like trumpets, with large open mouths and narrow necks, and above each of the boxes was inscribed the special object to which money, if it were put into that particular box, would be devoted. Our Lord, as He sat at the top of the steps, could easily watch the visitors to the Temple, most of them no doubt being worshippers, as they dropped their alms into the trumpet-shaped boxes. There they come in a long line, all the rich, proud, fashionable, religious world of Jerusalem, just fresh from their devotions in the Temple—men of rank, men of business, Pharisees and Sadducees, some perhaps making their offering with a certain ostentation, as a person who puts a bank-note into the plate to-day may not quite unwillingly let the collector or his neighbour see how much he puts in. Anyhow our Lord became aware that 'many that were rich' were 'casting in much.' It is only fair to notice that these rich people were liberal in their contributions. They acknowledged and performed the duty of alms-giving. Nothing is said or implied against them in the text.

But it is not upon any one of the rich Jews who were casting in much that our Lord's eye rests with tender sympathy. 'There came a certain poor widow.' Her eyes are fixed upon the ground, or when she lifts them they have that far-away look which sorrow so often brings. Perhaps as she goes she is repeating to herself some of the psalms of the sanctuary. She carries something in her hand, 'even all her living,' and quietly, almost stealthily, but gratefully, drops it into the treasury; and the eyes of Judgment are looking on! 'And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.' There the woman stands, with her two mites in her hand, and the generations come and go, but her figure and her sacrifice will never fade away.

¶ A public meeting was held at a certain English town in the interests of Foreign Missions. The chairman was reading out a list of donors. 'Mr So-and-So, a hundred guineas.' Tremendous cheering. 'Mr So-and-So, £50.' Great cheering. 'Mr So-and-So, £20.' Much cheering. 'Mr So-and-So, 6d.' No cheering. Not being pleased at this cool reception of a gift which probably cost as much sacrifice, or possibly more than any of the foregoing, the chairman, amidst breathless silence, exclaimed: 'Hush, I think I hear the clapping of the pierced hands.' The audience keenly felt the rebuke.[1]

2. The unobserved Observer! And still He sits 'over against the treasury'; still do those vigilant, all-seeing eyes follow the worshipper to the temple, visit the merchant on the exchange, peer into the office, and gaze around the home. It is a staggering moment when the soul awakes to the imminent presence of God.

First of all, it invests life with a strange solemnity. Life is no longer an unwatched vagrancy. We are under observation. Nothing can be done in a corner. 'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead

[1] J. H. Jowett.

me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee . . . the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.' This consciousness will fill the common seasons of life with a strange solemnity. 'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.'

But, in the second place, this sense of the mysterious and interested Observer invests life with a majestic dignity. Barrie has told us what dignity it gave to his art when he remembered that he worked in the same realm as Stevenson, with the eyes of the great master looking on. And what space and glory it gives to the science and art of living, to individual purpose and achievement, to remember that our audience is the living Christ, and that our least endeavours are witnessed by 'Him who sitteth upon the throne.'

And just as the revelation of the unobserved Observer invests life with a rare solemnity and dignity, so it also fills it with a passionate intensity. Barrie again says that the remembrance of Stevenson acted upon him like a literary conscience, condemning all clumsy and careless work, and girding the loins of mind and soul to pursue the last line and hue of the most radiant ideal. And so must it be when we are conscious that we work under the observation of the King, under 'the great Taskmaster's eye,' whose heart craves for the gift of finished work; we shall surely be intense in our labour, and we shall do it with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.

¶ 'When you play,' said Schumann once to musicians, 'do not trouble who is listening to you. Yet always play as if a master were listening.'

3. And now let us turn to the principles on which the Master shapes eternal judgment.

(1) *Mere living becomes real life when it becomes sacrificial.* We begin to operate with vital forces when we cross the border into the land of sacrifice. So long as we remain among the superfluities we are in the shadowy realm of existence, and we have not yet begun to live. Christ does not begin His reckoning, we do not come within the range of the heavenly standards, until all superfluities have been stripped away. The things that we can spare carry no blood. The things that we can ill spare carry part of ourselves, and are alive. 'He that spared not his only son,' the One He could not spare, gave Himself with the gift, and in the wealth of the sacrifice our redemption was born.

¶ Andrew Carnegie, after giving one of his munificent donations, made this striking confession: 'It is true I gave some pieces of paper, but they did not represent anything to my mind; I did not part with anything that I could understand. It is true those papers represented bonds, but I had never seen those bonds. It is just as impossible to make oneself understand that he owns a great fortune as that he owns a mountain. So far as I know there are as many bonds in the safe deposit vault as there were before.'

'What can I spare?' we say:
'Ah, this and this,
From mine array
I am not like to miss:
And here are crumbs to feed some hungry one:
They do but grow a cumbrance on my shelf'—
And yet, one reads, our Father gave His Son,
Our Master gave Himself.[1]

Here is a man who can spare a guinea for the foreign field. He has no hesitation about the offering. He can even relegate the matter to a clerk, and on the recurring days the amount is paid with the regularity of the sunrise. It occasions him little or no thought. He is dealing with superfluities, and the forceful riches of life remain untouched. But he has one child, the pride of his heart, the hope of his life. And one day a strange fire is kindled in the lad's heart, and a strange light comes into his eyes, and the lad knows himself to be called of God to the foreign field. 'Father, I want to be a missionary!' And the light fades out of the father's sky, and the hopes of a life tumble down like temples built in dreams! That is the experience which shatters. That is where existence ripens into life. The guinea was given, and nothing with it. The lad was given, and a life went with him.

(2) *It is sacrifice that makes all deeds effective.* We are told that 'a pound's a pound whoever gives it.' Such speech is the most perilous and deadly nonsense. A pound may be a pound whoever gives it, if you are only going to build a stable; but a pound may differ greatly from another pound if you are going to build the

[1] Frederick Langbridge.

City of God. In this realm material gifts become shrines, and they may be full or empty of mystic spiritual power. Surely if a spiritual presence can tenant a material body, it is not incredible that a spiritual influence can accompany a material gift. In these realms the character of the giver determines the momentum of his gift. If there be sacrifice in the giver there will be spiritual power in the gift. All our offerings—of strength, or time, or money—have their virtue conditioned by the sacrifice which gave them birth. It may be as in *The Merchant of Venice*—the golden casket may only enclose a death's head, while the leaden casket may contain the mystic word which shall be creative of inconceivable blessedness and peace.

(3) *This sacrificial life is born, not of caprice, but of abiding principle.* The lack of principle makes any life a thing of tags and ends of shreds and patches: it is consistent principle which makes life a vesture without seam. That is true of the entire circle of human relationships. It has been written concerning a well-known statesman, that 'it is probably because he is conscious of no great, over-mastering purpose, is possessed by no dominating sense of mission, that the most eloquent and impressive political figure of our time' remains 'a man of variable impulses and changeful moods.' Everybody knows, for it is the sublime commonplace of Christian teaching, that in the realm of the Kingdom the abiding principle is love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in loyalty to Him, in affection for Him, that we find the source of Christian liberality and sacrifice. When we begin to know Him the river of sacrifice begins to flow; 'that I may know him . . . *and* the fellowship of his sufferings!' This is the assured and certain order. It is devotion to the Christ that opens out the central depths and channels of the life, and springs of vitality are unloosed in strong and ceaseless service.

Outward or Inward

Mark xiii. 1, 2.—'And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down!'

Christ was coming out of the Temple with His disciples, and one of them—perhaps the mouthpiece of the rest—was moved to profound admiration of the splendour of the building which they were just leaving. The situation of the Temple was magnificent and commanded a wide view of the surrounding country. It was the third Temple that had stood there, and the most magnificent of them all. For forty-six years an army of workmen had been engaged in its erection and adornment, and it had not long been completed. Within that costly shrine the Jew believed that the Most High still held His court, and that in the holiest of all He still could be immediately approached. All the spell of centuries of religious history and sentiment rested on that spot. The Temple itself was a rare gem of architecture in a wondrous setting, a symbol of strength and beauty. Any Jew might have been forgiven his swelling pride as he contemplated it. He might even have been forgiven the thought that it would last for ever, that the religion which it enshrined would become universal, and that all the nations of the earth would come to worship and offer sacrifices there. Probably these were some of the feelings in the mind of the unnamed disciple as he broke out into admiration of the glory of the glittering pile.

It seems as if our Lord could not be infected with the same enthusiasm. Probably there was not so sad a city to Him in the whole of the Holy Land as Jerusalem, over which He had bitterly wept a day or two before. And the saddest place in Jerusalem was the Temple of Herod. It had been built by an altogether unworthy man, far more for his own glory than for the glory of God. It had become a den of thieves, a place where men trafficked for gain, or sought their own ends and their own glory. And this is what He said of it to His admiring disciple. Its splendour is doomed. There is nothing here that is permanent. 'There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'

1. These words of our Lord evidently made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples. A dismal prophecy it would seem to them, fitting into the sad mood of their Master during these days, a mood incomprehensible to them. It is a remarkable thing that what can fill one person with admiration can move another to infinite sadness. It depends on the point of view and on the standard of measurement, and also on

the moral disposition. It is a very remarkable fact, of which ample illustration may be found in the New Testament, that something looked at from one point of view may appear eminently prosperous and flourishing, and from another point of view may be seen to be on the verge of collapse and of ruin.

The Temple had never seemed to be more prosperous. Jerusalem was thronged with pilgrims, many of whom had made costly journeys to be present at its great festival. From far-off lands whither their trading propensities had led them prosperous Jews had come to bring a proportion of their spoils to the Treasury. Probably the crowds were never greater or the gifts richer. Never was the Sabbath more rigorously observed or the externals of religion more elaborately organized and carried through. Doubtless the machinery was perfect, and not a jot or tittle of the Levitical law concerning the Passover would be omitted. But we know to-day that the whole thing was a failure. The true spirit and essence of religion was entirely misconceived.

The Temple was always a sad place for Christ, the one place that made Him angry. He attempted to cleanse it, but it was too corrupt to be cleansed. It was a splendid shell, but the kernel was rotten—a body it was out of which the spirit had fled. It may be questioned whether the Temple was of the slightest service to humanity, whether its officials who were maintained in comfort by its offerings had any sympathy towards the needy and sinful and suffering people of their time. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a severer condemnation than that passed indirectly on these people by our Lord in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

We are not surprised, then, that Jesus Christ could not join in the admiration of His disciple. His was another point of view. He saw beneath the surface, and saw that the Temple was an appalling failure. Instead of drawing weary and distressed souls to God, it seemed to be hindering and repelling them. There was neither love nor compassion in its courts, but a spirit of pride and egoism, of greed and self-righteousness. The only thing that pleased Him in the Temple in this last week of His life was the thing that many would have despised—the notable offering by the widow woman of all that she had. That was a gift of sacrificial love that moved the heart of the Lord.

2. But now let us ask, Which of these two standards are we disposed to apply to religion to-day? Is it not the external? And is not the attitude of our Lord which is always characteristic of Him rather the attitude which we should earnestly cultivate, namely, that of looking beneath the form and the exterior to the life, the motive, the spirit?

Again, what is our common definition of a strong and prosperous Church — numbers? wealth? abundant activity? They had all these in the Temple at Jerusalem, and yet it was a dead failure. Jean Christophe, in Romain Rolland's novel, discovers that the artists in the Paris to which he goes are so commercialized in their spirit and aims that they have developed what he calls a numerical religion—'the number of the audience and the sum total of the receipts.' Probably, given a good building, in a good neighbourhood, an interesting and eloquent speaker, excellent music and organization, you could get the numbers and the wealth; but you might not have a really prosperous Church; you might not have a Church at all in the truest sense. You might have no communion with God, no passion for holiness, no Christian fellowship, no compassion for the woes of men, no evangelizing zeal, and no saving and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit operating through the ministries.

There is nothing more instructive on this point than the letters to the Seven Churches in Asia. There we get the same Lord whose eyes pierced beneath the surface of religion in the Temple searching the interior life of the Churches and pronouncing His judgment. And it is most impressive to see how that judgment is in several instances precisely the reverse of the judgment both of the Church itself and of others. The most startling case is that of Laodicea, self-satisfied, saying, 'I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.' And we know His judgment: 'Thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.' And there is Ephesus, orthodox, and crowded with activities, but with the fatal defect of lovelessness, its light threatened with extinction. Then there is Sardis, apparently strong and flourishing, so that people are talking about it enviously, and here is the word of Christ: 'Thou hast a name that thou livest and thou art dead.'

¶ In Staffordshire it is interesting and amusing to mark the contrast between the names of

the places and their actual character: Roseville, Swan Village, Daisy Bank, Bloomfield, Tividale, and so forth. Roseville is utterly innocent of the garden queen; Daisy Bank is a cinder heap; the last creature you would expect to see on the inky canal of Swan Village is the bird of snow; Tividale is a realm of furnaces and dirt; and many a summer has come and gone since Bloomfield smiled a field of flowers. Once it was a region of beauty, gardens, orchards, and dells; now slag, soot, and desolation mock its old poetic names.[1]

On the other hand, there is what would be called a small cause at Smyrna, crippled by poverty, struggling with difficulty, and here is its glorious assessment: 'I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich.' Clearly it is possible to have more real life in a small and poor Church, more spiritual prosperity, more of Christian brotherhood and sympathy than in a large and apparently prosperous community. It is possible also to be very busy about the wrong things, things that do not really matter and that only touch the surface, that make no real difference to either God or man. And it is possible to be busy about the right things in the wrong spirit. Our Lord did not condemn fasting, much less did He condemn prayer; but He did emphatically condemn the spirit in which the Pharisees fasted and prayed.

¶ 'I do not find it difficult to work,' wrote Norman Macleod, 'but I do find it very difficult to work in the right spirit.'

3. We can carry this idea through the whole of life. It is not the external that is to be emphasized, not the circumstances of the man, his social position, his means, his learning, but himself, his life, his spirit, his character. It is not what he has, or has not, of money or ability. It is what he is that vitally matters. It is not even what he is doing—working in a prominent or an obscure position. It is how he is doing it, what sort of a character he is weaving by the doing of his work.

¶ Dr Streeter says in his book *Adventure*: 'To be a Christian is not just to learn by heart the spoken words of Jesus or to imitate externally the acts reported in the Gospels. It is to reproduce—feebly perhaps, yet in a new and individual way—the life behind those words and acts.'

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

¶ The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves. Their *task* is transient; the majesty of their *spirit* is essential and eternal.[1]

It is 'the life' that tells. For the externals perish. There is no temple—whether it be of Church, or wealth, or fame, or system—that will not sooner or later crumble and pass. As for material good, the day will come most certainly, and is rapidly coming, when our hands will be loosed from it, and it will be ours no longer. We shall have no more control over it than if it had never been ours. But life will abide, the life of the spirit. The earthly house of our tabernacle will be dissolved, but we may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The soul abides, and it is what we are there that matters. There the temple of God may be built and religion abide. The worship and service of God will go on for ever. Therefore let us seek that now and seek it sedulously—the worship and the service of God, the worship of loving obedience, of daily communion, of service of men for Christ's sake.

The Lord's Return

Mark xiii. 3, 4.—'And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?'

The Church of the first days lay under the immediate pressure of the incoming Apocalypse. So we are told with renewed emphasis by the scholars of to-day. It took short measures of the world and of time. Everything was swallowed up in the thought of the mighty convulsion that was to arrive at any moment and shake terribly the earth. The disciples had been left by our Lord Himself strung up in this tense expectation, and His last prophecies were still ringing in their ears. It was the last days. There was nothing further to be made of this life. They might club their funds at once to keep body and soul together for the swift interval until the trumpet blew. The earth was already shuddering under the incoming invasion. It would flee away. Believers would be caught up into the air, to meet the great arrival. The Judgment would be set, the Books be opened, the last Account be made up. Those that

[1] Martineau.

were alive would be clothed with immediate immortality; and so they would be ever with the Lord.

1. Now the more we emphasize this mental condition, the more wonderful will appear to us the steadiness of temper with which the primitive Church emerged from its tremendous hour of disillusionment. This passionate expectation of theirs was bound up in their minds with our Lord's own pledges and prophecies. How was it, then, that its total collapse never loosened His paramount sway over their souls? If this immediate return, with all its apocalyptic reversal and achievement, was His main promise, His typical gospel, how did faith in His words ever survive the heart-breaking postponements?

Yet, most certainly, it did survive. It set to work quietly and resolutely to refashion its secular habits and manners, to create a new society, to build a new kingdom for God among men. It settled down to this long and enormous task with deliberate determination, with unbroken good humour, with unconquerable hopes. It was bound to occupy them for years, for centuries. What did it matter? After all, a thousand years were but one long day to the God, High and Holy, 'who inhabiteth eternity.' So it quickly learned to say for its comfort; and, justified by this gallant fling at the slow delays of time, it shook off its querulous complaints, it dropped its ecstatic raptures, and took from St Paul the practical measure of the work to which it stood pledged.

This is our first explanation of the swift and easy transition from their primary attitude of mind. For it was not necessary to abandon one mental mood in order to take up another wholly different from it. On the contrary, the two moods or tempers had never really been at variance with one another. The expectation of the Kingdom to come hereafter had never wiped out the interest of the Kingdom that already was theirs. They had toiled at the one in full sight of the other. And, therefore, as the intense pressure of the apocalyptic vision is relieved and withdrawn, the believers find themselves already engaged in the task that will fill the interval. They know what to be at, for they had always been at it; and they know already by experience that it is going to prove a tremendous business. It will take up all their time and energy. Life will be a more grey and drab affair as they toil and moil at their slow work of earth's regeneration, than when they were wholly caught up into the glory of the great expectation. But still, they have tasted the joy of hard work, and it is all for the Master, and it is a splendid obligation to fulfil.

This was the teaching of St Peter, as well as of St Paul. 'Wherefore, beloved,' he writes, 'seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, blameless in grace and knowledge. Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, submit yourselves to every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.' Could anything be more earnestly practical, more actual, more serious?

And then, secondly, there was one tremendous event which helped to clear the air and to show them their task. Can we at all measure what the destruction of Jerusalem really meant to those early believers? For us, it is one of the many historical crises in which a national story has come to a close. But to them it was absolutely unique. We hear something of the thunder of its fall reverberating through the Apocalypse. We can become aware of the terrible spiritual tension as we read the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was a stupendous moral cataclysm in which God shook into ruins all that could be shaken.

2. The awful shock of the fall of Jerusalem had two consequences. First, it was the most startling confirmation of the truth of our Lord as Prophet. He had sat on the Mount of Olives, and had told it all to His astonished and petrified hearers. Could they ever forget it, as they had gazed up at the majestic stones of the Temple, and pointed them out in their admiration to Him? And He had declared, there and then, that there should not be left one stone upon another. He told them of the trench that the enemy would cast about Jerusalem, and of the terrors of the siege, and of the slaughter, and the sorrow, and of the flight of mothers and babes from the city of doom. What wonderful reassurance this would give to their faith in Him, just when it was troubled and perplexed over the slow coming of the Promised Day! How could they ever doubt Him, whose every syllable had been 'fulfilled.'

And then, secondly, with this awful cataclysm before them as a fact, they found that they could read more clearly those last prophecies of His. They could distinguish now between a day of judgment which was to come before the existing generation had died, of which our Lord foretold plainly the day and hour, and another day of judgment, the final day, to which He referred in the remarkable confession, 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no! not the angels which are in heaven; not the Son, but the Father.'

3. It is impossible to read *The Old Testament in the New*, by Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, without being convinced that the main part of our Lord's apocalyptic vision belongs not to the Last Day, but to the fall of Jerusalem. It shows how the Lord's language is all taken from the Old Testament. If read in its context, it is seen to refer, not to the end of the world, but to the foundation of a new kingdom of God here on earth. And none of the imagery, strong and vehement as it seems to us, goes beyond what the Jewish prophets would use to describe a horror so great as the ruin of God's house. So, again, our Lord speaks of a day when He shall 'send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven unto the other.' This would recall to His hearers, not necessarily the trumpet of the Last Judgment, but the prophecy of Isaiah which said: 'Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel; and it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall blow, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria.' And if this was the text recalled, then it would be fully satisfied by the gathering that began at Pentecost, the gathering together of God's elect out of every kingdom, and nation, and people, and tribe, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, in Lybia, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, men out of every nation under heaven.

We understand now how readily the believers could afford to bear the postponement of the ultimate consummation, and to set themselves so keenly to building and organizing that permanent institutional Church which was to undertake the slow and gradual redemption of the earth. They could afford to wait for the end, for indeed the epoch itself had already begun. The apocalyptic glory had broken out in anticipation of the end. It had spread itself down from high heaven to take in the skirts of this earth. The energies of the final day are even now at their work, gathering in of every kind into the wide sheet let down from heaven.

4. Now what was the word by which they translated all this mystery into fact and act? It was 'the Spirit.' That was the power which came down out of the heart of Christ Himself, and brought down, to be embedded within their own lives, the full energies of the apocalyptic kingdom. The end had not come; but the Spirit had arrived. It fell on them. It lodged within. It recreated their new manhood. It was astir, fashioning the new citizenship for the Jerusalem which is above, that Jerusalem which, at the last, should be seen descending as a bride adorned for the bridal. They belonged to that fair and free city now. It was their true and only home. Now, under the cloud of night they were children of the day that was to be. In that day lay their secret, their interpretation. They did not belong to the night at all, however thick it laid its folds about them. From it they were alien. They already had their place and lot in the vision, in the light. For they had the Spirit; and in having that Spirit they had the germ of all that was to follow. They were the first-fruits, though the harvest take centuries to reap.

5. It may well be that we are puzzled and bewildered by this vision of the final Apocalypse. At any rate, we say, the end is immeasurably remote. It is no use our trying to believe that it may break in at any hour. All this is to us an impossible, empty, meaningless symbol of we know not what. Anyhow, what can we do better than leave it out of our calculations and do our plain duty here and now?

But what if it is not far off, but come? What if the judgments are proceeding? What if the Apocalypse has begun? We cannot put off the decision, or relegate it to some far remote end of the world. 'Behold! now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.' For if Christ is coming at the end of the world, then He has come already in the Spirit. He is here. His

eternal power is now at our disposal. We can live in the Spirit. This is the only life, and this is our gospel of salvation.

The Crowning Quality

Mark xiii. 13.—'He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'

1. *Life's Increasing Test.*—The greatest and most enviable form of power in human experience is staying-power. Life seems peculiarly designed for the discovery in us of such staying-power, for most lives grow harder and harder as the years multiply. There is a sense in which the experience of Jesus is the epitome of that of all mankind. The tragic last phase, with its unspeakable agony in the Garden and upon the Cross, was but the final unfolding of the meaning of the first temptations and of the repeated tests of His loyalty to God and man which studded the path of His life. And perhaps of all the wonderful things He ever said none was more welcome to Himself than His cry of victory from the Cross, 'It is finished.' Most lives tend towards the same type of experience. Perhaps there are exceptions—lives that begin in storm and distress and seem to ride for the rest of their days in a calm and pleasant roadstead. Yet even of these one suspects that in their success and in their serenity there may be a more subtle test of their spiritual condition than they suspect; and one that is the harder, therefore, to meet and satisfy. But for most of us the fight gets harder; life becomes more complicated, not less, as the number and responsibility of its relationships increase. As the powers of the body move forward to maturity, revealing the full strength of animal passion that is in the best of men, and as they just as steadily begin to wane, bringing the further complication of failing health, life often becomes a pitiful struggle.

2. *The Necessity of Continuity.*—We come face to face, therefore, with the necessity of continuity if the soul is to be saved. The standing of the last test, of the worst and the fiercest test, is essential. Not upon good beginnings, nor even upon steady continuings, but only upon solid endings can God place the seal of success. Arnold Bennett says of novel-writing, 'Anybody can write a good *first* chapter.' What avails it that we turned to God in our youth and held on to Him through years of severe struggle if now we are going to give way? It is not what we *were* but what we *are* that makes us safe. Could there be any greater condemnation, any more shameful condition for a soul that has once seen the vision, once felt the fire of God within him, than to qualify for that caustic description of Scripture: 'Ephraim is a cake half-turned?' This is a warning that our age needs peculiarly. We live in such a hurry that we worship swiftness rather than strength.

The fault of the age is a mad endeavour
To leap to heights that were made to climb,
By a burst of strength, by a trick most clever
We plan to forestall and outstrip time.

Yet to covet the prize and shrink from the winning,
To thirst for glory yet fear to fight,
What can it lead to at last but sinning,
To mental languor and moral blight?

What can God Himself do for the soul that wants only the end, but not the endurance? As Ibsen says, through his great character, Brand, concerning the peasant and his son who would not face the storm with him:

Were it but the power you lack
I would have borne you on my back.
My weary back, my feet that bleed,
Had gladly answered to your need;
But help is useless to a man
Who does not *will*, save where he can.

3. *The Way of Victory.*—Yet, provided we are willing to endure, however much we doubt our strength, there are considerations of great inspiration that can be brought to our aid. In the first place, the increasing test of life is not wanton, it has its purpose. It is everything to feel that the test is not opposition but opportunity. It is there not because God is against us, but because He is for us.

¶ Readers of Hugh Walpole's great novel *Fortitude* will remember the motto that its hero Peter learned to cherish early in life, 'It is not life that matters, but the courage you bring to it,' and they will recall how at one point in his troubled career the true interpretation of all his tribulation was brought home to his soul. 'You are worth it, you are too valuable to be left in peace,' was the message that came to him.

But a further consideration of overwhelming importance is that the power which can come only by the practice of endurance is the very substance of salvation. 'In your patience,' said Jesus, 'ye shall win your souls.' Here is the very soul of life's meaning, to receive for one's own possession the character that is Divine.

Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great hearts:
These are their stay, and when the leaden world
Sets its hard face against their fateful thought,
And brute strength, like the scornful conqueror,
Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale,—
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe,—
One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
One soul against the flesh of all mankind.[1]

The Finality of Christ

Mark xiii. 31.—'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.'

This is one of the great sayings of our Lord, and nothing but over-familiarity could ever blind us to the marvel of it. Strictly speaking, its application might be confined to the tribulations which were to gather round the doomed city and temple. But it is equally true of all Christ's teaching, whether in words or in life. What He claims is that the elements of His religion are eternal, more enduring than the fabric of the material universe. And this claim is made by One who was known as a village carpenter, a poor wandering preacher—One who knew He was about to be crucified by His own countrymen as unworthy to live. No more amazing words have ever been uttered, and the great question is, Are they true?

1. Take, first, Christ's conception of God. There are, of course, those who foreclose the whole question by blank atheism; and to these it is enough to reply that, while they can never *prove* that there is no God, the virtually universal instinct of mankind asserts that there is. Even Voltaire, the high priest of French scepticism, held that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one—so inherent in our nature is the need for a Supreme Being to worship and love. The only question worth considering seriously is whether the God presented to us by Jesus Christ is One whom we can love.

[1] Lowell, *Columbus*.

Christ reveals to us a God who suffers with and for His creatures. Now there is no other religion which presents a suffering God. There is, it is true, in certain forms of the Japanese religions a faint conception of such an One, which is said to have been taken from Christianity itself. But the idea of a suffering God is peculiar to the Christian faith, and therefore it is the faith which is conquering the world. Nothing appeals to the universal heart so deeply as the Cross of Christ, which means the suffering of God. Pagans shape God in forms of terror. To the Muhammadan He is an inexorable Fate. To the ancient Greek the gods were lovers of their own pleasure, 'careless of mankind.' Even to the Hebrew, Jehovah was, before all else, an infinite King and Judge, high and lifted up above the frail creature of His hand. Hence these conceptions of the Deity have passed, or will pass away before the Father of men whose image hangs upon the Cross of Calvary. The world will never outgrow that conception of Deity. It will never conceive a God more beautiful, or One who appeals more deeply to the forlorn heart of man. Heaven and earth may pass away, but this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering, agonizing, dying to redeem men—this will never pass away in time or in eternity.

The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set:
While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.[1]

We must, however, guard ourselves against thinking that, since God thus suffers for us, His love is a mere good nature, whose chief object is to save us from every painful consequence of wrong-doing. Turn to the words of Christ, and you will find among them some of the sternest ever spoken by human lips. He came, not to judge but to save; yet judgment was to Him one of the greatest of all realities—a final and inevitable discrimination of men according to moral character. Is this, then, a word which will pass away? Is sin a delusion, and conscience a false accuser? This is precisely what many say in these days. What theologians call

[1] Shelley, *Hellas*.

sin they declare is simply defect, no more to be censured than a lame foot or a bad memory. How then do we account for the condemnation we pronounce on ourselves for telling a lie or doing an unkindness? We have no such sense of moral blame for the lame foot or the poor memory. No; that sense of the reality of a moral judgment which runs through Christ's words is echoed by our own conscience, and therefore it can never pass away, just because there does exist an eternal difference between right and wrong, which no sophistry can finally argue out of existence.

2. This brings us to another of the words of Christ, a series of words arising out of this reality of sin—salvation, repentance, regeneration; in short, 'ye must be born again.' Of the necessity and possibility of this great renewal of nature the teaching of Christ is full; but both necessity and possibility are often denied. Some say that it is not needed. Sin is good in the making. Man's nature is in the process of growth; let it alone, and it will outgrow its defects. Others say, again, that a radical change of nature is an impossibility: evil, through habit, becomes part of our very being.

¶ Among the Moslems is this proverb: 'If thou hearest that a mountain has moved, believe it; but if thou hearest that a man has changed his character, do not believe it.' Schopenhauer voices the same thing when he says that a leopard can change his nature sooner than a man may change his. And a Hindu said to me, 'A man may change his acts, but not his character—this is fixed.' But there is nothing more fluid and unfixed than human nature. Water with temperature raised turns to vapour, lowered it turns to ice. But human nature is even more convertible. It is capable of almost anything.[1]

Christ's teaching asserts both the necessity and the possibility of this great change; indeed, He assumes both in all His dealings with men and women whom He met. Now, let our own conscience speak. Will it not say that nothing less than such a change can set the world right? The ever-revolving cycle of crimes and sins in the midst of which we live and the consciousness of our own failings both tell us of the need of some great regenerating change. And Christ declares that this is possible, and the experience of millions rescued from the power of evil proves that He spoke the truth.

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 70.

3. Turn now to the great word Righteousness, especially social righteousness. Righteousness, to Christ, includes more than justice in the bare and legal sense. It includes a generous and kindly outlook on the lives of others, an effort to put ourselves in their place, to treat them as we should wish to be treated. Social righteousness cannot mean less than this. Certainly it does not mean less in our Lord's life and teaching. His compassion on the multitudes, His beatitude on the poor, His feeding of the hungry, His parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Last Judgment all reveal what He meant.

Has modern society discovered any substitute for this social righteousness of Christ Jesus? Many, indeed, are tried, and the present state of the community in this Christian land shows that they are only substitutes and means of evasion. What is all the social unrest that sets class against class in every land but the sure and bitter proof that Christ's word does not pass away: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'? This is the one eternal condition on which the peace and harmony of communities can be built.

¶ Years ago there was a fire at the Sailors' Home at Liverpool, and when the crowd assembled at the cry of 'Fire!' they were appalled to see some men in the upper storeys, crying for help. The fire-escape was not nearly long enough to reach them. A longer ladder was brought and put against the burning building, but that, too, fell short of reaching them. Then an English sailor in the crowd, seeing the state of affairs, rushed up the ladder, balanced himself on the topmost rung with his feet, seized the bedroom window-sill with his hands, and then said to the men: 'Quick, men, scramble over my body, and down you go.' One by one the men came down, till all were saved, and then the sailor himself came down, his fingers blistered, his face burnt, his hair all gone; but he had saved the men. The ladder went a long way, but before the men could be saved it needed adding to it the length of a man. And long though our ladders of social and temperance reform may be, before the end that we seek is reached there needs adding to them the length

of a man—the man Jesus, whom we serve and whose gospel we preach.[1]

4. Again, if there is any word of Christ's of which there can be no doubt, it is surely that in which He makes Himself necessary to every human soul. 'I am the good shepherd'; 'I am the true vine'; 'I am the light of the world'; 'I am the bread of life'; 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'

Will this word, then, ever pass away? Is Christ as necessary now for us as He was long ago for His first disciples? There do seem to be people who imagine that they have actually outgrown Christ, and have become 'little Christs' to themselves. How little such souls must know of the length and breadth and depth and height of the love that passeth knowledge; of the treasures of wisdom that are hid in Christ; and of the weakness, ignorance, and pride of heart which make it possible for them to dream that they can be independent of Him who says: 'Without me ye can do nothing'! Those who have ever truly known Christ know this beyond all doubting, that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of all they are or ever hope to be. When heaven and earth pass away, and even when He has delivered the Kingdom to the Father, so that God is 'all in all,' He must be to them in some new and beautiful way, though no longer as Mediator between God and the soul, Bread, Water, Light, Way, Truth, and Life: for there, as here, 'the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.'[2]

Subtlest thought shall fail, and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go;
But our human needs they will not alter;
Christ no human age shall e'er outgrow.

Yea, Amen! O changeless One, Thou only
Art life's Guide and spiritual goal,
Thou, the light across the dark vale lonely,
Thou, the eternal haven of the soul.[3]

[1] *The Methodist Recorder*, Nov. 8, 1928.
[2] J. S. Carroll, *The Motherhood of God*, 109.
[3] Principal Shairp.

The Man on a Journey

Mark xiii. 34.—'A man taking a far journey.'

THE reference of the clause is somewhat vague, if we translate the Greek words literally; but if we look at it in its setting and context, we see that our Lord once more speaks concerning Himself. The thought of His approaching departure was often in the mind of Jesus during the last stages of His ministry. The parable germ of this phrase is wrought out to completeness in the Parable of the Talents and in Luke's Parable of the Pounds; and the same thought, in the essence though not in the form of it, was dominant in the night on which He was betrayed—'it is expedient for you that I go away.'

1. Our Lord, then, seemed to Himself, as He stood near the end of His ministry, like *a man taking a journey*. Perhaps the adjective 'far' is hardly involved in the Greek word Mark uses: 'going on a journey' or 'going abroad' would be a sufficient translation. From the standpoint of Jesus it was not a 'far' journey, an emigration to strange continents, a flight 'through tracts unknown.' He was going to the Father, He elsewhere said—going to the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He spoke the language of knowledge and of courage. One may even read into His words a certain wistfulness—an increasing eagerness to be gone. Men and women from fairer climates than our own sometimes come to visit our islands in the summer. But as autumn comes and the days darken and the air grows chill, they are eager to return to their own kindlier skies.

There's a whisper down the field where the year
has shot her yield,
And the ricks stand grey to the sun,
Singing: 'Over then, come over, for the bee
has quit the clover,
And your English summer's done.'

But to the disciples it was a far journey and a great separation. They could not for a long time realize that the separation was coming; and when at last they knew that it was near, sorrow filled their hearts. Their poor eyesight could not track Him out into the eternities: their souls beat against the bars of fate, and

cried out with Peter, 'Why cannot I follow thee now?' We, too, may have known what it means to watch beside some traveller departing on the same far journey. How far a journey it seemed to us who watched the departure! —far because of its mystery, far because we could bear our friend company so small a part of the way. And when at last there came what we foolishly call 'the end,' we felt like one who could only stand upon the shore and watch a ship putting out upon a misty sea. And some day we ourselves must set out upon the same journey. What shall we see? How shall we fare? Will it be a far journey, as it seems from this side of the sea? Or will the new land of promise suddenly break upon our vision, as when a fog-bank lifts and shows the tired sailor that he is near the shore? Great is the mystery of life! It is a mystery between two mysteries —the mystery of birth, and the mystery of death. What shall we make of it?

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

There are some things we do not know. There are some things we do not need to know. There are some things over which we can only guess and dream, knowing that our deepest soundings are only suggestions after all. Yet it ought to be some comfort and help to us that One we know, the Almighty and the All-loving, has taken the far journey before us, out even to its uttermost distance. His first followers found it so: the far journey was, to them indeed as to us, a mystery, yet within the veil a Forerunner had entered for them, even Jesus. And the Master Himself expected that the same thought would help His disciples to the end of time. 'I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

2. Now, linked here with this thought of His departure, as elsewhere in our Lord's teaching, is the thought of the *added responsibility thus laid on those who are left behind.* 'He left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.' Perhaps the delegation of authority and the removal of the Master were needful for more reasons than one, but at least they were needful in the interests of the servants. Responsibility is part of the training of manhood. Perhaps these men would hardly have become men in the full sense had they continued to lean their full weight upon a visible Master: they might have become mere echoes, children learning lessons by rote. And the change, if it was needful to their growth as men, was certainly needful to their perfecting as Christians. For Christianity in one aspect of it is the reign of the spiritual, the sway of the unseen. And its work was not complete until it had led men from the visible to the invisible, from the historic to the eternal, from the Christ who could be handled with the hands to the Spirit who came to work like leaven in the world, from the blessedness of those who saw and believed to the greater blessedness of those who saw no longer and yet kept the faith.

May one detect a note of anxiety in our Lord's voice when He compares Himself to a man going on a far journey and leaving his house in charge of his servants? Grant that His departure was a forward movement, most necessary in the interests of the disciples and of the Kingdom, no one can inaugurate a forward movement without taking risks; and our Lord took the risks. To leave men without the support of the visible presence, the voice they knew, the human face they loved—it was like taking a crutch from an invalid. Would they be intelligent enough, loyal enough, prayerful enough to support the new responsibilities? One fears that on some at least of His many visits to His house the Master has found the sense of responsibility sadly lacking. There are some servants of His who are very eager to obtain posts of duty, and very ready to leave them if some other attraction beckons them away. There have been servants who for the bribe of some small private gain have been willing to sell the house and all its contents. There have been servants, as He Himself said there would be, who have given themselves to quarrelling with their fellow-servants, and to eating and drinking with the drunken, so that He has had to appoint them their portion where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is why some of our best teachers in spiritual things lay so much stress on what they call 'the practice of the presence' of the unseen Master, as if they would make up for the veil that is

drawn before their eyes by the intensity of their faith and the alertness of their imagination.

3. This Traveller does not take His departure until He has taught us one thing more—*to listen for the sound of His returning footsteps.* To say that He is going on a far journey is after all only one side of the matter. The house is still His. The servants are still His. He who left His house in charge of His servants is not going to leave His affairs finally or altogether to them; He will see to so much superintendence and interference as may be needful. The far journey is to bend back again upon itself, and the Master is to return to His own.

According to our Lord's own teaching His coming again was a thing of many forms and stages, sometimes in mercy and sometimes in judgment, a reality for that generation, and perhaps a reality for all generations on to the final consummation. Sometimes He has come and has found His servants sleeping. Sometimes He has come and has found them grossly disobedient. Sometimes He has come and has found them awake and ready to meet Him with loyalest love and richest hospitality. Whatever else the future may hold of signs upon the sky or wonders upon the earth, this at least ought to be included in our thoughts of the coming again of Jesus: that we do not know the moment in which He will stand at our door and knock; we do not know the hour in which His judgments or His mercy may seek our life, or may unveil themselves in the world before our eyes. It is a great paradox—the far journey and the sure return going on side by side. Yet the paradox is only that of the Master's own words, spoken almost in one breath: 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' and 'I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you.' Whatever comings the future may hold, we shall best be ready for them if we are awake to the comings that are going on now; if, when He comes in opportunity, we welcome Him; if, when He comes in chastisement, we humble ourselves before Him; if, howsoever He come, our hearts recognize Him with love's clear insight; and if, with love's overflowing welcome, we 'summon all our powers to entertain Him.'

It may be in the evening,
When the work of the day is done,
And you have time to sit in the twilight,
And watch the sinking sun,
And the long bright day dies slowly
Over the sea,
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of me;
While you hear the village children
Passing along the street—
Among those thronging footsteps
May come the sound of my feet.
Therefore I tell you, Watch!
By the light of the evening star
When the moon is growing dusky
As the clouds afar;
Let the door be on the latch
In your home,
For it may be through the gloaming
I will come.

Sleeping

Mark xiii. 36.—'Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.'

1. THERE is a sleep which is *begotten of familiarity with the truth.* That which once startled us may ultimately minister to a deeper slumber. The alarm bell which originally stirred us into the brightest vigilance may act at last as a lullaby to lead us into deeper sleep. The green of the spring-time arrests us by its novelty, but by summer-time the observation of most people is satiated, and the attention has gone to sleep. The permanent grandeur of the night sky has long since induced the majority of people into a profound sleep, while a display of fireworks will stir them into most deliberate attention. What is the principle underlying all this? Unwilled observation is soon satiated and goes to sleep. Willed observation, vision with executive force behind it, is full of discernment, and is continually making discoveries, which keep the mind alert and interested. Get a will behind the eye, and the eye becomes a searchlight, and the familiar is made to disclose undreamed-of treasure.

Is not this equally true as to our familiarity with Christian truth? In the Word of God we have pictures of the life of Christ, revelations of His mind and disclosures of His heart. We may become so familiar with them that our attention goes to sleep. There are no further unveilings, no novelties, nothing unexpected,

and the familiar vision ceases to arrest our attention. What do we need? We need to 'stir up the mind,' to put some force behind it, to direct it into a strong, fresh, eager inquisitiveness. We need to put it into the attitude of 'asking,' 'seeking,' 'knocking,' and the familiar presence will reveal itself in unaccustomed guise. Every day the ardent lover makes a new discovery. If men would come to the familiar pages of God's Word with mental alertness analogous to that which they bring to the inspection of the stock-and-share list, they would have gracious surprises, which would make the heart buoyant and glad. The Book promises its wealth to the wakeful. There is no book has more to say about 'unfolding,' 'revealing,' 'manifesting,' 'showing,' 'declaring,' and the only condition is that the spectator of the promised Apocalypse should be an ardent seeker, stirring up his mind in eager and determined quest.

¶ At Cambridge, as soon as I went up, I came under the influence of a second year man, a man that is to say a year senior to me, called G. H. Russell Garcia. He afterwards became a Congregational minister at Sunderland, and died young after doing a great and outstanding, but too short, work there. One day Garcia suddenly said to me, 'Green, you were brought up in a religious home. Well! how would you like to read the Gospels for the first time to-day? If you came to them fresh at the age of twenty, what effect would they have on you? Would you believe them? And what effect would the central figure have on you? Would Jesus attract you, or repel you?' At the time the question merely gave me a nasty jolt. But I never forgot it. And many years after I was led by it to make an experiment. It must have been at least ten years after I was ordained, and I was going from Manchester to Euston on an express train. No sooner had the train started than I realized that I had brought no book or paper to read. And then Garcia's remark came into my mind. So I took out my pocket Testament and decided to read one of the Gospels straight through, and to do it, as far as possible, as if I had never read it before. Of course it is not possible entirely to get rid of the associations and presuppositions of a lifetime. But let the reader try the experiment. It is marvellous how the figure of Jesus stands out with a new distinctness and a new grip on one's mind, as a result of reading the Gospel story straight through, with an open mind, and without any purpose except to see what the writer of the Gospel really does say.[1]

2. There is a sleep which is *begotten of decided opinions*. There is a very suggestive sentence in one of John Stuart Mill's essays: 'The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing, when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors.' That is to say, a decided opinion may make a man thoughtless about his opinion and may induce a mental sleep. It so frequently happens that when a man has attained a decided opinion he ties a bit of tape about it, puts it away in a pigeonhole, and lapses into unconscious slumber. He leaves off thinking about it. While the conclusion was still uncertain, he remained a persistent explorer. But now that his judgment is decided, the explorer goes to sleep. What is the issue? We lose a thing when we cease to think about it. It is well to have decided thoughts, but it is bad and fatal to stop thinking. There is need in every life for a fresh stream of thought to be continually playing about the most cherished opinions, principles, and beliefs. When the photographer is developing his plate in a dark room, he keeps the liquid in constant motion, moving over the face of the plate, and evolving into clearer outline its hidden wealth. Our thought should be continually moving over the face of truths and beliefs, bringing out into discernment lines and beauties never before conceived.

3. There is a sleep which is *begotten of failure*. When repeated disappointment visits the life, when the 'wet blanket' is frequently applied to our fervent ambitions, when the fire in the soul is damped, and enthusiasm dies out, the life is inclined to a most dangerous sleep. How many there are who were once awake and enthusiastic in civic service, or in seeking social ameliorations, or in the ministry of Christian instruction, who are now sunk in the indifference of a profound sleep. They were disappointed with the results. The grey conditions at which they worked never gained any colour. The unattractive lives to which they ministered were never transfigured. The desert never revealed

[1] Peter Green, *Our Lord and Saviour*, 13.

even a tiny patch blossoming like the rose. And so their enthusiasm smouldered. They became lukewarm. Their reforming energy abated. They went to sleep. Is not this the peril that the Apostle Paul anticipates for young and enthusiastic Timothy? He was beginning his Christian discipleship, fervent, hopeful, optimistic, with the eager consecration of his entire strength. The Apostle knew that disappointment would confront him, that cold water would be thrown upon his enthusiasm, that many a hopeful enterprise would issue in apparent failure, and the young recruit would be exposed to the indifference of a fatal sleep. 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.' Stir it into flame! Keep your first love ardent and vigorous. Let disappointment only deepen your consecration, and failure keep you near the well-spring of eternal life.

¶ The saddest thing in all the world is to see the young men, who once were all aflame for God, faint and grow weary, perchance utterly fall. Of how many it has to be said in these days that they once burned and shone, and, in the end, grew cold! But through the Holy Ghost it is possible to keep the faith, to end in more than the passion of youth, to die testifying, and not, as Voltaire reports of Cavalier, 'much failed of his first enthusiasm.'[1]

¶ Two men met upon a steamer during a Scottish excursion and they talked with interest of many things, among others of Sunday schools. 'To tell the truth,' said one, 'I am not very enthusiastic about that kind of work. I was a teacher for many years, and after all I seem to have done no good.' 'Well, I *do* believe in Sunday school work,' said the other. 'As a lad I received life-long influences for good in my old class at school'; and he named the school with which he had once been connected. 'Were you there?' cried the other; 'that was where I taught. Were you there in my time? My name is——.' 'And I was your scholar. I remember you now.' The younger man gave his name, and memories succeeded each other concerning that old school unforgotten by both. There, side by side, stood the teacher who believed he had done nothing, and the man he had influenced for life.

4. There is a sleep which is begotten of *a false sense of attainment.* When difficulties appear to have vanished from our life, when temptation no longer encounters us with dreadful front, when the precipitous hills, that took so long to climb, are away back on the far horizon, then we are in imminent peril of a most dangerous sleep. 'I saw then in my dream that they went on till they came to a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep: wherefore he said unto Christian, "I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap." "By no means," said the other; "lest sleeping we never awake more. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober."' And how did these two pilgrims contrive to keep themselves awake as they journeyed over the enchanted ground? '"Now then," said Christian, "to prevent drowsiness, let us fall into good discourse." "With all my heart," said the other. "Where shall we begin? Where God began with us?"' The great dreamer has summed up their conversation in this marginal note. 'Good discourse prevents drowsiness.' They began with the very first stages of their conversion, and told each other the story of God's redeeming grace. They reviewed the miracles of the Lord's mercy. That is the secret safety for any traveller over the enchanted ground. Begin your review 'where God began with you.' Tell over to yourself, or to others, the early story of the Lord's dealings with you. Stir up your mind with a rehearsal of the wonders and favours of God, and so far from lapsing into sleep, you will be kept awake in a grateful song. The grace of the Lord will occupy your heart with such intensity that spiritual lapse will be impossible. 'Watch therefore . . . lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.'[1]

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

Mary's Tribute of Devotion

Mark xiv. 3.—'And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.'

Our Lord had arrived at Bethany on His last journey to Jerusalem, and while He remained there, the guest, doubtless, of Lazarus and his

[1] J. H. Jowett.

sisters, Simon the Leper made Him a supper. Who Simon was we do not know. Apparently he had once suffered from leprosy and been healed, or from some disease that had been so long mistaken for leprosy as to cause the fearful title to become attached to his name. There are those who think that he was Martha's husband, and there are others who conjecture that he was the father of our Lord's beloved friends. But there is no evidence for either suggestion.

That there was some kinship, however, between Simon and the members of the household dear to the Master we can hardly doubt. For the evangelist John tells us in his Gospel that not only was Lazarus present at the supper, but Martha also, his sister, was there, prominent in service. And Mary, too, was there, with thoughts in her heart too deep for speech, unnoticed by the guests, till, attracted by the smell of fragrant spikenard, they looked up and beheld her pouring with trembling hands the precious contents of an alabaster box over the Master's head. 'Ah!' as Horace Bushnell says, 'it takes a woman disciple, after all, to do any most beautiful thing; in certain respects too, or, as far as love is wisdom, any wisest thing.'

1. It was a simple deed with a wonderful pathos and glory about it. Nevertheless, when the disciples saw it, they had indignation among themselves because of it. They were put out and irritated, as is only too often the case with men, by the unconventionality and emotional effusiveness of a woman's deed. 'Why couldn't she have kept her feelings under control like a rational being? What business had she to disturb the supper in this annoying fashion? If it had not occurred to her that it was her duty to help in serving the guests, as her exemplary sister, Martha, was doing, then at least she might have recognized the propriety of remaining quiet, and allowing the meal to proceed without interruption.'

¶ We men are always so ready and anxious to keep women right, like the wretched creature Laertes in *Hamlet*, who reads his sister such a lesson on her maidenly duties, but declines almost with contempt to listen to a word from her as to any co-relative obligations on his side![1]

[1] George Macdonald.

In the form of these or similar peevish reflections, which found expression in sharp glances, the indignation of the disciples probably declared itself at the outset. And, had it not been that Judas stepped in and suggested to them an apparently sound reason for their entertaining such feelings, they would soon have become ashamed of themselves. But when he advanced the claims of the poor, and in view of their needs characterized Mary's action as wasteful, the eleven felt that he had provided them with a ground that justified their complaining sentiments. 'Precisely so,' they said to themselves, 'Judas is right. We were conscious that something was wrong, though we could not quite explain what. It was a proper instinct that led us to disapprove of the deed. This cruse of spikenard was probably, as Judas calculates, worth not less than three hundred pence. What an amount of good that large sum of money would have done, had it been spent in feeding large families and clothing naked children; instead of which it has been wasted, through the reckless extravagance of an impulsive and demonstrative woman.' Yet it never occurred to them that the same process of reasoning applied with equal cogency to the money laid out by Simon on the supper of which they were partaking, and in the hearty enjoyment of which they had been interrupted. People who are given to censuring others generally manage to contract themselves out of the scope of their principles of criticism. Charity in judgment begins with them at home, and ends there.

2. We need not stay to apologize for an action which received our Lord's commendation. It is to be feared that there are still people afflicted with that meanness of disposition which measures all things by a utilitarian standard. Generous hearts must lay their account with the churlishness which will never learn to estimate the significance of their services except in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence. Yet there are more things, and these things the greatest in life, than are dreamt of in the philosophy of those who regard arithmetic as the queen of sciences, in whose imagination the only thing that glitters is gold, and who look upon the conventional standards of society as the final oracles of moral obligation. The spirit of Mary, begotten and evoked by the Spirit of

Jesus Christ Himself, reproduced in the lives of martyrs and confessors, saints and benefactors, reformers and evangelists, has kept the Church alive, and caused it to be owned down the centuries by God as an instrument for the fulfilment of His purposes.

With regard to the plea on behalf of the poor, what our Lord said was, 'Ye have the poor always with you.' Their claims exist, and have to be met, of course. Deeds that are directly charitable we are all bound to perform. 'But what are the poor?' as Dr Joseph Parker says. 'Mere eaters and drinkers, gormandizers, people gathered around a trough to eat and drink? Have they not eyes, imaginations, sensibilities, divinity of nature, that can be touched by the appeals of beauty and music and heroism and nobleness? We misunderstand the poor when we suppose that they can only eat and drink, and that to give to them means to give something into their hands, or something they can gnaw with their teeth. It is a base idea.' And Canon Barnett, Father Dolling, and others who spent their lives among the poor, were of the same opinion. They believed that 'every picture may be a hint, every tint of beauty may thrill the soul of the poor with a new life, and every sound of the organ may answer something already in the soul, but silent.' Had Mary been dissuaded from performing her beautiful deed, and the three hundred pence been devoted to the charities of Bethany and Jerusalem, the poor as well as the rich in every age would have been grievously impoverished. Judas's censure is a slander on the poor, implying as it does that they would accept his preferring of their claims in such a case. Is it not amongst the poor that we meet with some of the most thrilling instances of lavish generosity and devotion?

3. Let us indicate one or two features of Mary's action, which will ever be spoken of 'for a memorial of her.'

(1) *She did what she could.*—The Master Himself said, 'She hath done what she could.' It was not a deed performed on the impulse of the moment. The alabaster cruse of spikenard was not in Mary's possession by a happy chance. She had given much thought to the question of how she could best show her reverence and love for her Lord. Some declaration of her devotion she felt she must make. Speech did not come readily to her. Mary's was a deep and silent nature. She was certain she could never tell Jesus to His face all that was in her heart. But might she not try to do what that other woman had done to Him in Galilee, when He was seated in the house of Simon the Pharisee? If she, with all the shame and sorrow that clung about her heart, could bring herself to perform such a courageous and lovely action, why not Mary also? It would mean exposing herself to public gaze, she that was so timid and diffident by nature. It would mean subjecting herself to misunderstanding and cruel criticism, she that was so gentle and sensitive in disposition. Every man and woman with any sensibility will recognize that the costly part of Mary's action was the action itself, and not the fragrant spikenard which her trembling hands poured forth.

Does not her example waken new desires and purposes in our hearts? Our Lord only asks us to do what we can. But what we can do is not the thing we feel able to do without any difficulty.

¶ 'A pupil,' says John Stuart Mill, 'from whom nothing is ever demanded which he cannot do, never does all he can.'

¶ We are more apt to see the comfort in the words, 'She hath done what she could,' than the solemnity of them. They are a tender recognition, but a tremendous challenge. 'What she could' means all she could. The Master compares us, not with others, but with ourselves. There is the mercy. But with our best selves, with our possible selves, there is the rub. What I did, subtracted from what I might have done, gives the bad remainder, the immoral debit, the moral discredit. 'There's a kindness in His justice that is more than liberty.' Thank God for it, but let us not misunderstand the truth and think we are at liberty to do what we happen to feel like. Did the Lord say of Sapphira, 'She hath done what she could'? [1]

(2) *She did more than she knew.*—It was not given to Mary to anticipate the significance which her gracious action would have for the Saviour. How it gladdened and inspired Him in view of the awful ordeal that lay before Him! 'She hath anointed my body,' He declared, 'aforehand for the burying.' What a service she was privileged to render to her Lord!

[1] M. D. Babcock.

It was her best, and yet how poor
That cruse of spikenard sweet and rare!
She entered in at Simon's door
With trembling, though familiar there.

What could she give to Him whose call
Had brought her brother back from death?
It was her best, yet poor and small
For Him, the Lord of pulse and breath!

He took the fragrant gift: a wreath
Of praise He twined about her name.
It lit for Him the cave of death:
'Against my burial she came!'[1]

Our actions always perform a ministry beyond our immediate intentions. 'It is impossible,' says Mark Rutherford, 'to limit the effect which even an insignificant life may have.' You speak a kindly word, for example, to some one, and if you think at all about what you have done, you attach very little importance to the episode. But the person whom you have treated in that manner has an inner history of his own, and you have affected him in relation to experiences that you know nothing about. The things that wear a different appearance for him in consequence, the temptations you have helped him to overcome, the difficulties you have encouraged him to face are recorded in a book which is sealed to your eyes. And not only is such a person's own life influenced to a degree and in a variety of ways that you never anticipated, but the lives also of others with whom he comes in contact participate indirectly in the beneficent effects of what was to you a simple, and soon became a forgotten, incident.

¶ 'Never was a sincere word utterly lost,' says Emerson. 'Never a magnanimity fell to the ground, but there is some heart to greet and accept it unexpectedly.'

¶ I remember once meeting a man in America whom I hardly knew, and whom I had not seen for at least three years. He came up to me in an hotel, and greeting me very cordially, said: 'You remember our last meeting in Philadelphia? I was terribly depressed that night—never mind why—but you cheered me up and sent me home singing.' Now I was not too exalted by this man's gratitude—for this reason: I had no recollection whatever of the conversation to which he referred.[2]

[1] George T. Coster.
[2] F. A. Atkins, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*, 66.

A chance remark, or a song's refrain,
And life is never the same again!
A glimpse of a face in a crowded street,
And afterwards life is incomplete.
A friendly smile, and love's embering spark
Leaps into flame, and illumines the dark;
A whispered 'Be brave' to our fellow-men,
And they pick up the thread of hope again.
Thus never an act, or word, or thought,
But that with unguessed importance is fraught,
For small things build up eternity,
And blazon the way for a destiny.

(3) *She let her heart have its way.*—Once Mary had thought over what she might do, and felt the prompting to do this thing, and realized that she could do it, even though it would cost her many an inward tremor, she resolved to do it, and did it. And so her deed is spoken of to-day 'for a memorial of her.'

It is not that we do not devise generous things in our hearts. Most of us, all of us surely, do that. But the passage between the heart and the lips, between the heart and the hands, is too often blocked. Strive to keep these lines of communication open and in good repair, that ideal impulses may come to their fulfilment in the actualities of life. Undertake the irksome task, say the kindly and forgiving word, write the magnanimous letter, give the generous gift. We cannot summon up the passionate feelings of devotion for Christ that inspired Mary of Bethany. But let us be true to those noble emotions that urge us from time to time, and our natures will be deepened and enriched with larger and rarer capacities. It can never be our privilege to render such a personal service to our Lord as Mary rendered. But, inasmuch as we do it unto one of the least of His brethren, our action is interpreted and accepted as done unto Him.

Wherever now a sorrow stands,
'Tis mine to heal His nail-torn hands.
In every lonely lane and street,
'Tis mine to wash His wounded feet—
'Tis mine to roll away the stone
And warm His heart against my own.
Here, here on earth I find it all—
The young archangels, white and tall,
The Golden City and the doors,
And all the shining of the floors!

Why this Waste?

Mark xiv. 4.—'Why was this waste of the ointment made?'

Our Lord was in a house in the little village of Bethany. With the shadow of the Cross cast upon His soul, a shadow growing every hour more dark and terrible, He was enjoying a quiet, homely dinner with some friends. 'And as he sat at meat there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.' And we might have expected that the disciples, His closest friends, would have welcomed the act; that their hearts would have vibrated in sympathy. They knew more than anyone else who and what He was; their lives had been lit for months with the radiance of His presence; they must have been thrilled over and over again by that wonderful combination, to be seen in its fullness only in Him, of strength and gentleness. They had been uplifted with the dazzling hope that He was to be the Messiah for whom their nation longed. But they could not be made to grasp the fact that in order to reach His Messiahship He must die. They could not see that this anointing by Mary was, as it were, a preparation for His burial; that this sacred oil set Him apart with a consecration to death. He had told them more than once that He must die, but it never went deeper than their ears. And this dullness of comprehension showed itself in the question that they asked. They looked at the woman pouring out her love, as she poured out her spikenard, and said, 'Why was this waste of the ointment made?'

We are not surprised at the attitude of Judas, but the other disciples, who joined in the murmurings, seemed equally incapable of appreciating this act of sheer, uncalculated love. 'This ointment might have been sold for so much and given to the poor,' they said. So it might! And was Jesus not the Friend of the poor, living in simplicity Himself and eschewing all luxuries? And the Master Himself had often told them that the Kingdom of heaven was to be the Kingdom of the poor. Besides it was Passover week when almsgiving was considered a paramount duty; public opinion required it, and therefore of course everyone did it. And the disciples found it hard to imagine how one who ought to be giving alms to the poor could throw it all away like this.[1]

¶ The vulgar irritation of the apostles at the 'waste' involved in Mary's beautiful and significant act — those very apostles from whom had come Peter's confession and who had seen the Transfiguration ecstasy—gives us the measure of the disharmony, the utter want of comprehension, the creeping conviction of failure, now existing amongst them. Romantic enthusiasm has been transformed into prudence and 'common sense': perhaps the worst form of degeneration with which any leader of men has to contend. Through their unworthy and unloving criticisms strikes the solemn and tragic comment of Jesus on this, probably the greatest spontaneous acknowledgment of Messiahship which He received—'She hath done what she could. She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.' They are the loneliest words in literature. Removing their Speaker by a vast distance from the common prudent life of men, from all human ideals and hopes, they bear within themselves the whole mystery of the Cross, the 'King reigning from the Tree.'[2]

There is the element of surprise in the story. The woman's act was costly out of all proportion to its utility, but her Lord commends her extravagance. Love and expressions of love are ends in themselves, and are not to be measured by the low standards of utility. There can be no greater mistake than to be parsimonious in our expressions of love. Sacrifice and devotion, which spring from love, are never wasted. They have a value in themselves, and make for the permanent enrichment of life. The most useful things are not necessarily the most precious. Flowers do not rank high in the scale of utility, but there are many useful things which the world can more easily do without. The most useful deeds are not necessarily those of greatest worth. A millionaire's activities are worth more than those of a poet, but the world can do without millionaires better than without poets.

1. *It will not do to be dominated by the standards of utility.* It is well for us that God was not guided by such considerations when He made the world. It is the way of love to give

[1] A. H. M'Neile, *Discipleship*, 19.
[2] Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way*, 131.

lavishly and this is what we see in all the handiworks of God. In Nature things are not measured and weighed in scales, and nicely calculated and numbered out. The spirit that breathes through universal Nature is the spirit that broke the alabaster box. One batch of heather that flings off its seeds in countless millions could cloak the mountain-side in purple. The birch that shakes its leaves above our head could fill with seedlings the whole belt of wood. The sun is shining upon dead Sahara as well as on the living world that needs it. And the gentle rain that falls on the mown grass is falling just as sweetly on the granite rock. Was He utilitarian who formed and decked the twice ten thousand creatures who dance and die upon a summer's eve? Have we not here in primal force the spirit that prompted Mary to her deed? [1]

¶ Lying in the field this July day, says Mark Rutherford, I take up a tall grass stem in flower. Its delicacy, grace, the poise of its head, are lovely beyond speech. But the whole field, ten acres of it, is covered with tall stems equally delicate, graceful, and with the same perfect poise. For whom does this beauty exist? [2]

¶ The earth is not constructed merely on the principle of producing so much food for man's bodily wants. It has its cornfields, but it has also its wild-flowers on hill and moorland to give us the sense of a touching and simple beauty; it has its precipices, and wastes, and seas, to inspire us with a feeling of the sublime and infinite. The utilitarian looking on this side of things may say, and has said, 'To what purpose is this waste? It might have been given to the poor.' But the world was made by One who had in view not merely the physical wants of man but his intellectual and spiritual nature, and who has constructed his dwelling-place so as to train that nature above the animal and earthly. The golden glory of the furze that brought tears to the eyes of Linnæus is as true a gift of God as the joy of the harvest, and it is a most Christian endeavour to make the poor partakers of both.[3]

If our forefathers had been guided solely by the thought of utility, they would never have built those wonderful cathedrals which are the glory of Europe. They would have said, 'Why this waste of money and of labour? Nothing is needed for purposes of worship but four bare walls and a roof. Why, then, spend years on these vaulted roofs, painted windows, noble arches, and richly-carved columns?' But the sublime architecture, the rich windows, the solemn hush, the pervading air of reverence, the quiet sanctuary in the midst of the city's rush and din, the morning and evening prayer and the swelling chants—these things are not waste. They appeal to what is deepest in us, and point us to the Eternal.

So, if we are governed by considerations of bare utility, we will pour scorn upon the expressions of love. What purpose do they serve? Our children bring us offerings on our birthday—some trifles made at school and of no possible use. Why should they have wasted time and energy over them? Or it may be some paltry things that they have bought with a few coppers saved. Why should they spend their scanty pocket-money in buying things that are useless? Why this waste? Waste! Would to God that there were more such waste in the world! Would to God that there were more love and sacrificial expressions of love! The world would be an infinitely poorer place without such waste.

2. *Love and the expressions of love are ends in themselves.* Love and its expressions need no utilitarian justification. The offerings of love are never wasted. You send flowers to the sick woman who is poor and bedridden. You could have sent something much more useful. Yes, but the flowers are the offerings of love, and are accepted as such. They are not valued for their utility, or even primarily for their beauty, but because they are the expression of sympathy and love. It is such gifts that make life beautiful and tender.

Without love our philanthropy would be come cold and calculating and professional. Where love confines itself to utilitarian channels it ceases to be love. Love is an end in itself, and needs no justification on the ground that it is useful. The expressions of love are not waste; they enrich. Life is poorer than it need be because we are so miserly in our manifestations of love to one another. We think it is a sign of strength to be undemonstrative. We regard an outward show of affection as so much

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, 96.
[2] *Last Pages from a Journal*, 293.
[3] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life.*

waste. We should do well to remember Paul's exhortation, 'Let love be without hypocrisy.' That means, first of all, 'do not make a pretence of love when it is absent'; but it also means, 'do not disguise or hide love when it is present.' The great majority of men and women are hungering for assurances of love, and it is tragic that we should think it a waste of emotion to make our love to others known. What was the use of this woman pouring out a cruse of precious ointment on the Master's head? Use! What had that to do with it? She had to find a way of expressing the love and devotion of her heart.

¶ There is a pretty story told of Dr Dale, of Birmingham, how that once when travelling in Australia he happened to say in public that he thought that English people needed to be reminded of the duty of letting those whom they love know of their affection: 'Love me, and tell me so.' The report of the saying reached Birmingham before the Doctor, and when, on his return some months later, a welcome meeting was arranged for him, the first thing that met his eye when he entered the hall in which the meeting was held was a motto in large letters which ran along the front of the gallery facing the platform: 'We love you, and we tell you so.'[1]

3. *Sacrifice and the expressions of sacrifice are ends in themselves.* Mary spent much money on the gift which she brought to Jesus. The value of the gift, however, was not to be measured by its monetary worth, but by the sacrifice and devotion of the giver. Sacrificial love needs no external justification. Its justification is within itself.

A young man of great ability and promise goes to the mission field, and in a year is struck down by fever and dies. We say, 'Why this waste?' But is it waste? Such a life, brief though it is, is not lived in vain, but brings forth fruit year after year.

¶ When Irene Petrie, young, gifted, beautiful, went out to mission work in Kashmir; when, amid sordid surroundings and filthy fever dens, her loveliness was soon laid low; when she whose life was music was laid in a lonely grave, the only available coffin an old harp case!—then how many voices cried 'waste'! Why was this beautiful, fragrant life poured out? Why this waste?[2]

[1] G. Jackson, *A Parson's Log*, 181. [2] H. W. Morrow.

But is there not even more than that to be said? To give oneself freely in response to the devotion of love is not to waste life, but to enrich it. There is much which we cannot understand, but self-surrender to the call of love is never waste, though our life be cut short and our purposes be frustrated. The law of sacrifice is infinitely higher than the law of utility. We do not go deep enough when we ask, To what end was this sacrifice? Sacrifice is an end in itself. And it is by sacrifice that the world is being redeemed. It is by sacrifice that the world is being purged of its dross. It is by sacrifice that the nobler virtues are winning their widening way. It is by sacrifice that the world is being 'bound by gold chains about the feet of God'—by the sacrifice of Christ first, and then by that of all those who follow in His steps.[1]

4. This story of the anointing of Jesus by Mary is within Passion week. Now, that is very significant. An act done in that spirit, Jesus said, was the best possible embalming of His supreme sacrifice on Calvary. It was also the best possible illustration of the spirit which moved Jesus to lay down His life. There was an affinity between the two and her story will be always coupled with His death. Here we learn something of the nature of His love to us and the love we owe to Him. Do you say that the death of Jesus at thirty-three was waste? In the history of humanity it has accomplished more than all the ingenuities and subtleties of philosophy. Love gives and lavishes and dies, for it is love.

¶ In the story of *Catherine Furze* Mark Rutherford describes with exquisite simplicity and beauty how the poor servant girl, Phœbe, on her death-bed desired the last three chapters of St Matthew to be read to her. 'She, perhaps, hardly knew the reason why, but she could not have made a better choice. When we come near death, or near something which may be worse, all exhortation, theory, promise, advice, dogma fail. The one staff which, perhaps, may not break under us, is the victory achieved in the like situation by One who has preceded us; and the most desperate private experience cannot go beyond the Garden of Gethsemane.' And so—

There is music in the midst of desolation,
And a glory that shines upon our tears.[1]

[1] H. M. Hughes, *Faith and Progress*, 177. [2] W. Major Scott.

Spiritual Values

Mark xiv. 5.—'For it might have been sold.'

In the picture we see Mary kneeling at the Master's feet and the broken vase with the perfume floating through the room. There was a hush in the talking, a silence in which love eternal was trying to say something to each man's heart. Then, as is often the case in life, the first man to break the silence was the man to whom the silence had said nothing. 'It might have been sold'—and we feel that vandal feet have trampled the vase and its precious burden into the dust, and that the roar of the market has swept into the sanctuary of one worshipping, love-laden, life-laden moment. Judas gazed with unseeing eyes upon one of those things so central in the literature of the world, but so rare in its life—a spontaneously dramatic scene. He mishandled a beautiful situation. And his bad taste does violence to our artistic sense. But there is something far more serious than bad taste. It is very easy to over-estimate the value of taste. In all the higher civilization of the world there is a tendency to allow good taste to atone for bad character. Refinement is substituted for reformation, and among some people a polished sinner gets more respect than an uncouth saint. These people charge Judas with taking a business view of the situation. But the real charge to be brought against him is that he got no view of it at all.

Judas missed in Simon's house, not a dramatic scene, but an eternal truth. Only a shallow and unspiritual judgment will think less of him for knowing the selling-price of alabaster and nard. His sin lay in that he had lost the power to see in these things a sacrament of 'the life that is life indeed.' But it would be an empty vindication of Judas to say that his suggestion is 'true as far as it goes.' A thing has to go a certain distance before it begins to be true. It has to touch the spiritual and eternal in life, and Judas missed that. And so this man, with his market price and his mental arithmetic, was not an intruder—he was an outsider.

How Jesus had pleaded for the priceless things. And Judas had companied with that unworldly life, had heard the Master say that Solomon in his state robes was not so well dressed as a wild-flower, and that the widow's half-farthing was worth more than the jewels of the rich, and that the cup of cold water was worthy a heavenly reward; and yet he had not learned that there are things too beautiful to be sold.[1]

¶ A curious feeling comes to us when some things are sold. Browning Love-letters—it seems a kind of sacrilege. The Family Bible—we have seen it in a pawnbroker's window. Family treasures and heirlooms—it is pathetic in the auction-room when they go to the hammer. And the slave-market—what must that have been! There are things that seem to be above all price. David felt this of the water brought by men who, for love of their young leader, hazarded their lives. He felt that it was above price. It was not water; it was blood. Yet what is in the market in this world? A man may sell his honour, sell his country, sell his good name. Man or woman may part with something that is more precious than life itself.[2]

There was One in the room who knew the meaning of Mary's act even better than she knew it herself. We can fancy how Mary was probably puzzled by the question, Why did you not sell it, why thus throw it away, did you think what you were doing? She could not in the least have explained why she did it. It was impulsive. She was not thinking but feeling, and letting her feelings go. Hers was not the cool, calculating head that could figure it up.

And it was precisely the lack of calculation in it that made the Master praise it. If prudential considerations and calculations had come into it, if she had been thinking of its pence value, it would not have been the same. Jesus would not have received the same impression of overwhelming love. Everything that could be given was given. It all went without one calculating thought. And what satisfied Him satisfied the woman too. One touch of self-consideration, one hesitating, calculating question—and her own heart would not have been satisfied in it.

Give all thou canst, high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more.

These words were written by Wordsworth in defence of the royal saint who paid for, and of the architect who planned King's College

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, 52. [2] J. Rutherford.

Chapel, Cambridge, a positive extravagance of beauty, and he continues—

So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

There are two lessons we may learn from this story—one from Mary and one from Judas.

1. From Mary let us learn how to enlarge the worth of our possessions, whatever these may be.

Now we may regard our possessions in either of two aspects. They may represent to us so much material equivalent, so much money-value. We may say of any ability or education which we possess—'This ought to bring me so much in the market.' We may say of anything that we possess—houses or lands, pictures or books—'These are worth so much, they would bring me so much in money,' and when these things are given for the good of others, we see at once a new value in them.

It is too often the material price that counts with us. One man, for example, dedicates his life to a great cause; and there are those who say that 'surely there is no need for thus wasting an ability which might have won him fame and fortune.' Of a great churchman it has been said—'He might have been Lord Chancellor.' If he had gone to the Bar, what a fortune might have been his! Think of David Livingstone; take away from him his missionary work; let him go into Africa, as other men have gone, for gold and diamonds. He might have been a millionaire—what a fortune his! 'It might have been sold.'

This does not mean that the world's method of life is anything but sound. We live by such exchange—by buying and selling. It is a great part of our life. But the point is this—that there is possible for us an enlargement of whatever is ours which raises it above all price, which brings it into the region of the priceless things. Our work as a workman may be worth so many shillings a week in the market. It may be worth infinitely more. Let that work be charged with purpose and feeling, character and aim, generous thought and unselfish love. No earthly standard then can measure our work; no common wage can really reward it.

¶ There is more in the day's work than the handling of goods and the earning of wages. 'The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law'—yes, and on such there is no price. They are the rich gift of God to your soul, and you have the ennobling right to give them to your brother, who will never be rich enough to buy them at your hands. Go back to your work with His Spirit in your hearts, and for you the leaden shackles of earthly necessity shall be transmuted into the golden freedom of love and truth, and minted into the largesse of willing service.[1]

It is perhaps more evident in some lines of life than in others. In the work of a teacher, for example. His training, his special gifts and abilities, his daily work in school, all his influence upon his pupils—these give him his place and so bring him his salary, for the world knows something of their real value. But who does not see that, when that work is done in the true spirit, and when it accomplishes the highest ends, it takes on a value beyond all material measurement; and the fruit of it is away in the far-off years, in the moulding of men and women?

It is true of our work, whatever it be. We can get a price for it in gold; but if we fill our work with a fine spirit of love and faithfulness, and offer it to the service and the well-being of men, it passes to the place of the things that cannot be sold.

All, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;

that inner life of thought and love which men do not see—

This,
I was worth to God.

We enlarge the worth of our possessions when we spend them, as Mary did, in love.

2. The lesson from Judas is this. Here is a man who is blind to the higher values. Here

[1] P. C. Ainsworth.

is a man who measures by the pence value and so misses the priceless things.

We do want to think of love and prayer, righteousness and purity, beauty and truth. For the difference among men lies in their appreciation of the best things. Judas represents not only the covetous, the calculating, and grudging who say, 'Why this waste?' but the hard, material, unspiritual who are far from Christ and His thoughts and standards. They would measure things by results, as they say, meaning the money-balance. They would measure things by utilities, meaning things that help a man to get on in the world. They speak about useful information, useful knowledge. Shall we teach arithmetic? Certainly. Mental arithmetic—what would a boy be worth in this world without that? Here is Judas at his mental arithmetic. But classics, poetry, music, art? It is not so evident how these can be turned into money. But education is for the enrichment of life; and there is a life that is more than meat or money, more than the abundance of the things which a man possesses. We do not wish the lower things to blind us to the higher things as Judas was blind here. He never saw the gift that Mary gave to Jesus in that hour. The fact that he priced the gift proves that he never saw it; to have seen it was to have known that it was priceless. Judas knew the market-price of things. He knew about spikenard. But there was more than spikenard here; and that something more than spikenard he could not see. So the covetous, unspiritual, earthly-minded man is always missing the richest and the best.[1]

The priceless things cannot be bought. We can buy a book of poems, but not the poetry. No man was ever rich enough to buy a poem. If it is his, he must have it as the unpurchasable gift of God to his soul. And as surely as we cannot buy a poem, so we cannot buy a home, or a happy hour, or a good conscience, or a rich hope. Trite old story, yes, but we must go on telling it till the vital truth it implies has fashioned the practices of the world.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking:
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking;
No price is set on the lavish summer;
June may be had by the poorest comer.[1]

[1] J. Rutherford, *The Seer's House*, 261.

The blindness in the house of Simon is followed by the bargain with the chief priests. The man who cannot see the priceless is quite capable of selling it. That is the logic of history. That is the tragedy of materialism. Judas sold his honour, his place in the brotherhood, the great trust of his life, and the very love of God. Men little think what impieties, treacheries, and shames lurk beneath the materialistic appraisement of life. For us who dwell amid so much that is artificial, so much that is not easily suggestive of the unseen sources and spiritual values of life, there is but one way of escape from the peril of the earthly view and the earthly valuation—a peril never far from the hearts of the children of men. And that is in the evangel of the grace of God.

The Guest-Chamber

Mark xiv. 14.—'Where is my guest-chamber?' (R. V.).

Hospitality was enjoined upon the Jews as a part of their religious duty. When we read the ordinances prescribed for them in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, we see that there was careful provision to be made by each individual family for the stranger or sojourner. And in each house there was a room—usually the best room—set apart for the use of guests. The quality of the room, of course, would vary with the instincts of the individual. The devout and generous man would interpret the commandments literally, as an expression of his faith and obedience; while the unloving and selfish man would make but grudging provision. But in every household there was a well-recognized guest-room.

Now this man, the use of whose guest-room Christ asked for, had somehow come into touch with Him in the earlier days of His ministry. We do not know when or how, nor do we even

[1] Lowell.

know his name. He is one of those men who, while he stands out as a conspicuous example of faith, and love, and devotion to Christ, is eternally anonymous. Somehow he had come into contact with Christ, and had learned to appreciate Him, to know Him, and to love Him. There is no room to doubt that he was a disciple of Jesus. He was not called to leave all and follow Him like the Twelve, but he had chosen Christ as his Master, so that every word of His was a command which he delighted to obey.

It may be that Christ and this anonymous disciple had met frequently all unknown to the other disciples; for, of course, the Master knew many whom they did not know. At any rate, Christ was well acquainted with the ways of this man's household. How do we know this? Well, He said to His disciples, 'Go into the city and you will find a man doing an unusual thing—bearing a pitcher of water.' This, of course, was ordinarily the work of the women of the household. He said, 'You will find such a man at such an hour, and if you follow him he will lead you to the house of one who is My friend and who will receive you in My name.' The inference is that this man, in one of his quiet talks with Christ, had offered Him the use of his guest-chamber whenever He wanted it.

¶ It is said of the famous Lord Holland, that he wished to be remembered as 'the friend of Charles James Fox.' This goodman of the house has a far nobler memorial. He is known as the man who in a time of mortal peril befriended Jesus Christ. Dr Watson in his book, *The Upper Room*, remarks that the times when Jesus' public friends withdraw and disappear are often the seasons when His private friends show themselves. It was so in this last and awful week. While Judas makes his bargain with the priests, they anoint the body of Jesus for the burial. When John himself forgets to offer the use of his house for the Passover, they make ready an upper room. When Peter has denied that he ever knew the Lord, they hurry at the moment of greatest risk to own Him before principalities and powers. When the dark days came and the crowd turned their backs upon Christ, then these friends stole out of their modest hiding-places and stood loyally by His side.

1. We may take this story as an illustration of the demand which Christ always makes, following upon our acknowledgment of Him. We have all at some time or other made some acknowledgment to Christ of our faith in Him. We know Him for the Son of God, for He has come very near to us again and again. We believe His Word, not merely because we have been told it is His word, but because it has found us again and again in the place of our need. And when we have expressed our faith, whether secretly or in concert with others, we have really meant it. And Christ takes us at our word and responds to our acknowledgment of Him, whenever and however it has been voiced, by some such demand as He made to this man in Jerusalem. He says, 'If you believe in Me, you belong to Me. If you believe that I have redeemed you, then yield to Me the life which is rightly Mine.' This is the real meaning of those words of His which come to us again and again in so many ways and by so many voices, like the melody which runs through all the variation of time and tone and tune in some beautiful sonata—'Give me thy heart! Where is my guest-chamber?' And our answer is the attestation of the reality or unreality of our faith. Do not let us make any mistake about this matter. That man is not a true Christian who is content merely to believe the propositions and statements of God's Word and to assent to the articles of the Christian Creed; but the man who gives Him the guest-chamber, who surrenders to Him gladly and fully the highest, the supreme place in his heart.

We read that this man gave to Jesus the best that he had—'a large upper room furnished and prepared.' And that is what Christ wants of us. He wants the large upper room of our life, furnished with all the gifts of our unique personality. He wants our powers and capacities, and all those aptitudes of which we are consciously the possessor. He claims them all. His voice comes to us again and again, sometimes direct, sometimes through one of His disciples, but always reiterating and re-emphasizing the same demand.

¶ My friend Mr Collier, of Manchester, told me of an incident that occurred during one of his mission services at the Central Hall. Holman Hunt's picture was on the screen. In front sat a working man and his little boy. A great hush was over the audience. Presently the little boy nudged the man and said, 'Dad,

why don't they let Him in?' The man was a little nonplussed, then after a moment's silence said, 'I don't know, Jimmy. I expect they don't want Him to come in.' Again a moment's silence, and Jimmy said, 'It's not that. Everybody wants Him.' After a pause he continued, 'I know why they don't let Him in. They live at the back of the house.' The man who refuses to admit Jesus has some motive, something kept behind and out of sight. He is living at the back.[1]

2. This whole incident is a wonderful illustration of the fact that Christ accepts what love puts at His disposal. No one ever says to Him, 'Lord, take my life,' whose life He does not take. No guest-chamber is offered to Him with all the sincerity of a loving heart which He does not accept and occupy.

How glad that man must have been that when the city was full of pilgrims he had never let his room out for gain, and had never occupied it himself, or taken out of it the comfortable plenishings with which he had made it ready for the Master! How happy he must have been that day that he had resisted all such temptation, and had silenced all misgivings by saying often to himself—'That is the room that belongs to the Lord Jesus; and some day, I believe He is coming to it!' For He did come! And when He came, Christ simply said in effect to him, 'You see I have been depending on you all the time, and I knew you would not fail Me.' Then it was that the man found he had done an infinitely bigger thing than he had ever conceived when he gave up that room to Jesus. One moment it was but the ordinary guest-chamber of a Jewish house. The next it was the throne-room of the King of kings. For in that room Jesus spoke words the like of which He had never spoken hitherto. In that room He declared Himself to be the True Vine, with all the precious promises bound up with that revelation. In that room Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, more than at any time declared His kingly Divinity when He took a towel and girded Himself to wash the feet of His disciples. In that room He took the common cups and plates which formed part of its furnishings, and made them the vessels of the First Sacrament. To that same room He came again after His resurrection. From that room He sent His disciples into all the world to preach the gospel; and upon them as they gathered there after His departure He sent the Spirit at Pentecost. That room became the most God-used room the world has ever known.

No one ever said to Jesus, 'Lord, come and occupy the guest-chamber of my life,' who did not find just what this man found. The possible influence of any surrendered life is always positively incalculable. For He will take the common things that we have, if they are given as our best, and He will multiply their use beyond anything we have thought possible.

¶ There are writers such as Dr M'Dougall who say that the African race has never produced individuals of really high mental and moral endowments. But we have Edwin Smith's *Aggrey of Africa* to disprove it. Having early taken Christ as his Lord and Master the little Fanti boy determined to give himself to the service of his fellow countrymen. After being educated at Cape Coast he went to America where he won a dozen of the highest degrees obtainable, and was chosen as a member of the Phelps Stokes Commission to inquire into the actual conditions and needs of education among the negroes. To all the biggest questions in education, in life in all its length and breadth, Aggrey had a clear and unswerving answer. It was emphatically a Christian answer. To his nephew he wrote: 'To those who have fire I give more fire, and to those who have might I want to give a might mightier than man's. I want to sing a song of hope to the despairing; to breathe the breath of love that will chase away all hating.' Love, harmony, whole-hearted co-operation between the races—this, above all, he taught and lived. 'The greatest inter-racial advocate I ever saw,' said one who knew him well.

3. This man who gave Jesus the room and the other necessaries for the Supper was not himself present at the feast. It seems as though when he gave his room to Christ there was nothing more he could do, and Christ needed nothing else. He was hidden, and was quite content to be hidden so long as Christ, his Master, was served. This is the joy of love, that it finds its abiding satisfaction not in being ministered unto but in ministering. And this

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

is the true glory of life, so to serve Christ as to be lost sight of ourselves. There is no higher honour than this, that in our life Christ is magnified, and we ourselves are invested with permanent anonymousness just like this goodman of the house. Let us, like him, make over to Christ the first place in our heart and life, and then we shall be gladly content to give and to do all in our power to make it easier for the Lord Jesus to carry on His blessed work of bringing other lives into His holy fellowship.

Heart-Searching

Mark xiv. 18, 19.—'And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?'

They 'sat at meat with him'—a company of friends gathered together for what was a farewell feast. It was a moment when their loyalty would be strung up to the highest pitch. What a bomb then Christ flung into their midst by the startling words—'one of you shall betray me.' It was the last thing they had dreamed would ever happen. But are we not surprised at the strange effect the words had upon the disciples? We would at least have expected them to be indignant, and to say, Who can it be? We would have expected them to doubt each other, to look this way and that, wondering which of their neighbours had this rotten spot in his heart. We would probably suspect everyone but ourselves. That is partly why the world is in the condition in which we find it to-day. We blame everyone, as a rule, except ourselves. We blame the politicians for not getting things done, forgetting altogether the fact that governments can never move a single step beyond the level of the conscience of the community. We blame our leaders, especially those with whom we do not agree. We blame the class to which we do not belong. We never think of asking how much there is in our own spirit that is wrong. We blame the Church for the want of zeal or for the world's attitude to Jesus. We never consider how much of the indifference to religion lies at the door of our own misrepresentation of Jesus. That is why one of the most popular ways of drawing a crowd is to denounce the sins of society.

¶ Bernard Shaw, in the preface to some of those plays in which he throws the searchlight upon the iniquities of our social system, warns his readers not to try to fix the blame for these evils upon the villains of the play, as if they and their kind were the root of all the trouble, but to realize that everyone of us by his indifference or his selfishness is equally guilty. He finds he has to give that warning, lest his plays, instead of quickening the conscience of his audience, should encourage the mood of the Pharisee, and send people away from the theatre saying, 'I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other men are—greedy and lustful and hard-hearted—even as these rogues and profiteers.'[1]

1. What made them ask this question, 'Lord, is it I?' when Jesus told them there was a traitor in the camp?

(1) One reason was that they were honestly out for the highest. They had no desire to win a good reputation. They wanted a clean heart and a right spirit. Christ had taught them to value that first of all. He had taught them that it is what we are at heart that matters: and, therefore, if there was anything wrong within—any secret laxness or spot of decay—they were ready to be told. It is a great thing when a man gets into that position with Christ. The one quality He demands is the quality of sincerity. Jesus Christ is a difficult Master to serve, and our Christianity begins only when we are ready to walk in His light though it shatter every illusion we have about ourselves, and tear off every rag of pride that covers our nakedness.

(2) But another reason for their question was that they were not really at peace in themselves. They were aware of dark things in them that had never been slain and conquered. They were conscious of fears and hates and passions which at any moment they felt might rise to take them by the throat. That is not an uncommon position. Many a man goes through life conscious that he is carrying in his heart a slumbering volcano. When we are honest with ourselves we know that it is not always the love of God and the desire of righteousness that keeps us going straight. Sometimes it is the thought of public opinion, the fear of a shattered reputation. There are things we

[1] James Reid, *In Touch with Christ*, 277.

would rather die than do; but sometimes we get uneasy reminders that the wrong desire is there; the hateful thought; the spark that, given the right conditions, might blaze into a devouring flame and lay our life in ruins. Many people are unpleasantly aware of these hidden things and sometimes they rise to the surface and break their peace. Even Paul did not seem to be free from this shadow. 'I bring under my body, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.'

¶ At the corner of old maps of the world, of the fifteenth century, may be noted a large, blank space, without form and without name, whereon these three words are inscribed: *Hic sunt leones.* This sombre corner exists also in man. The passions prowl around and mutter, somewhere within us; and it may be said also of one dark spot in our souls: 'Here are lions.'[1]

There is something quite real and honest about this fear. The man who has a tinge of it in his heart is in the safest position. He knows the precipice and fears it, and therefore he keeps away from it. He keeps in the place of dependence on God.

Ah yes! all preciousness
To mortal hearts is guarded by a fear.
All love fears loss, and most that loss supreme,
Its own perfection.[2]

It is a sign of progress when this fear becomes the dominant fear of life—the fear of growing blind to God's love—the fear lest in the movement of God's purpose we should find ourselves, through any slackness or selfishness, among the unfit. So many of our fears are on the lower plane. But there is a real place for a fear which is worthy—the fear not of suffering, but of sin; not of calamity, but of the blindness that misses God's call in it; not of misfortune, but of that treachery of our own hearts that makes us fail in the hour of temptation.

¶ 'As I grow older,' wrote Dr Dale on his birthday to a friend, 'I think more and more of *the perils of living.*'

¶ One of the best of men, who did more for his day and generation than almost any other in the last half-century, refused to have his biography written till he was dead. He had seen, he said, too many men fall out in the last lap of the race, and sink miserably in some quicksand.[3]

[1] Victor Hugo. [2] George Eliot. [3] James Reid.

2. There is hope for a man when he gets into this position of absolute sincerity. You cannot do anything with a man till he is sincere, till he becomes conscious of himself and aware of his own nature. But he has to go further, of course, if he is to be healed and find true peace. For there is no real victory over evil merely in repression, in holding things down—the chained tiger and the captive ape. How do we reach a real inward peace and victory and freedom?

(1) In the first place, we must be open to ourselves and to God about what we feel are unworthy desires and passions. We must accept our nature and realize what is good and what is evil in it. There is a great deal of needless confusion and conflict in the minds of people, because they do not understand themselves. Some people look upon temptation in itself as wrong and evil. But if Christ was tempted—and we are assured that He was—temptation in itself cannot be wrong. All temptation comes of crude desires, of instincts which in themselves are a healthy and living part of our nature. We carry with us impulses which come of our primitive heritage. In themselves these are not wrong. It is not wrong for a person to find it hard to get on with his neighbour. Temperaments, tastes, ambitions, perhaps, may clash. But it is wrong if this clash of minds, these prejudices, make us hate other people or want to injure them, or prevent us trying to understand them. It is not wrong in itself to shrink from trouble or danger, though Christ can often deliver us from this fear. But it is wrong when this shrinking makes us run away from duty, or tell a lie, or fight for our own hand, or be false to a friend. These natural impulses, which are the root of all temptation and the energy of all sin, are a living part of our make-up and in themselves are healthy and right, and by the grace of God can become the energy of a strong character.

If we are on the verge of temptation it is good to take a square look into the wrong way of life. What will it lead to? Think it out, calmly, in the light of Christ and of reality. What will this selfishness involve? What will it bring to the lives of others? Where will this hatred, this greed, this lust, land us? No better service can be done for us than that of many poets and novelists in showing us, sometimes unwittingly, how selfishness works out

and where passion leads, and how, in the long run, the wages of sin is death. We cannot read *The Forsyte Saga*, for instance, without praying to be delivered from the kind of world pictured there. Think out the wrong suggestion. Strip off its illusion, its false glamour, by looking the naked results of it full in the face. Christ was helping these disciples to do this when He used this word 'betray.' For what is all selfishness, all self-seeking, all following our own crude desire but the denial of God's loving purpose, treachery to that energy of love that made all things and strives to make them beautiful—the betrayal of the Son of God.

(2) A further step is to be utterly open to the love which can win us and is able to capture all our nature, all the energy that might, else, be poured down some gutter of shame. That was the great secret of the victory of the disciples. They felt in that hour the heart-beat of His love. Even as He spoke to them of being betrayed by one of them, there was no bitterness in His tone, no suggestion that, if the dastardly plan were carried out, all would be over between Him and them. 'One of you shall betray me,' He said. Then, a moment after, He took bread; when He had broken it He said, 'This is my body, broken for you.' Think of it!—and one of them was going to help to break it!

Even Judas saw, when the deed was over, what he had really done, and went out of his mind with the utter horror of that revelation of love denied. And there was Peter; he, too, betrayed Christ, and in spite of it He looked on Peter and saved him with the look. And the disciples betrayed Him, for they fled from the Cross, and turned their backs on Him. But this love that death could not destroy saved them, won all their nature, changed them into saints and heroes—free, whole-hearted, and, because He reigned in their hearts, at peace. This did not happen in a moment, or without a struggle, but Jesus was in the struggle, and they felt that He would see them through, that there was that in His love which would do it. And, knowing this, there broke upon the early Church the song of triumph, 'Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.'

Is Life a Blessing?

Mark xiv. 21.—'The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.'

1. Can it be said of a human life that it would have been better that it had never been? Men have sometimes said it of themselves. In some deep affliction, in some spasm of pain, in some great depression of soul, a man has cursed the day of his birth. Many a time life has appeared a very doubtful blessing, and sometimes a positive evil. Men have longed for death to get out of their troubles or sorrows or pain.

¶ Tortured in mind and body the only desire now left to Swift was for death. When he parted from a friend it was with the expressed hope that they might never meet again. When a large pier-glass fell one day on the spot where the Dean had been speaking to a friend a few minutes before, he met the congratulations on his escape only by a regret—'I wish the glass had fallen upon me.'[1]

This is different, however, from the judgment which makes the gift of life itself a mistake. Better dead is not the same as better never to have been born. A good man who had made much of life and done much in it and fought the good fight manfully might yet be willing to lay down his arms. It is not necessarily to despise the gift of life to be ready to have done with it, and to think that one has had enough of it here. We may even say that it is the natural fruit of the best life to be ready for the harvest, to be timely wise for the inevitable.

> It is time to be old,
> To take in sail—
> The god of bounds
> Who sets to sea a shore,
> Came to me in his fatal rounds,
> And said, No more!

St Paul, who had filled up his glorious life with great thoughts and great deeds, was willing to remain for his life-work's sake, that he might still serve, but was also willing to depart, which he said was to him far better. There are some weak and cowardly reasons which make some long for death and even seek it, but a similar mood may be induced by the noblest of all

[1] Henry Craik, *Life of Jonathan Swift*, ii. 243.

reasons. A high sense of honour even will make death seem preferable to disgrace. 'It were better for me to die,' said Paul, 'than that any man should make my glorying void' —better dead than that he should so lose his reputation that he would be a hindrance instead of a help to the great cause he had at heart. It is no reflection upon the value of life to make such a judgment; indeed it may be because of the high worth placed upon life that death may also be valued.

There is thus a clear distinction between the verdict that it would be better to die and the other verdict that it would have been better never to be born. This latter suggests that life itself is a mistake, or at least, that the particular life has been no good gift. Even here we cannot indiscriminately label this as the weak whimper of a craven soul. It is our Lord's deliberate judgment here about a man who was a disciple of His own, and who therefore had made at least one high and noble decision. And if we think seriously, and observe dispassionately, there are probably occasions and circumstances about which we would all declare that should a man be there, 'it had been good for that man if he had not been born.' This, too, not always in the way of passing a moral judgment on a particular life. We can easily conceive of situations where it might be true of even whole populations. Have we not thought it reverently and sorrowfully of some of the little children in our cities, born to little chance of anything true and pure and beautiful in life?

2. It is a fact that good men not only have felt this despair of others and of mankind as a whole, but have also sometimes confessed it of themselves. Job in his pain cursed his day and said, 'Let the day perish wherein I was born.' He is represented as having had a happy and prosperous life, full of peace and plenty and usefulness and faith. Does it seem like pettish irritation that, when he suffered loss and pain and sorrow, he should bemoan his lot and despise the whole gift of life? That is to misread his situation. It was not just his own personal pain that made him cry out in despair. It was the deeper problem which his pain represented. It was all bound up in his faith in God; and for him to lose that faith was to lose everything.

It may come in another form as it did to the prophet Jeremiah, who said, 'Cursed be the day wherein I was born. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man child is born unto thee; making *him* very glad,' he adds pathetically. He was a sensitive soul, feeling himself called to a great work to proclaim God's will to his people whom he loved, yet meeting with obloquy and contempt and his message received with scorn and refusal. He had to see the fated nation stagger to its doom in spite of himself, seemingly in spite of God also. The anguish of his soul forced from him the bitter cry, because here, too, it was not his own personal pain that was the problem. It was, as in Job's case, almost like the negation of God to the prophet. But these we may say were only temporary moods in both Job and Jeremiah; for they both kept their faith in God and came out into the light.

This mood of pessimism may begin with a personal sense of emptiness and disappointment, making a man believe that his own life is not worth living. Or it may come through looking out on the world, seeing its evil with sharp eyes and believing that the evil is incurable, till mere life is thought of not as a boon but a curse. As in Ecclesiastes, 'I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praise the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better than both is he which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work which is done under the sun.' This terrible depression of mind was due not to any sorrow of self, but to the contemplation of the sorrows of others. It is the same sentiment as the verse of the Chorus in Sophocles' *Œdipus Coloneus* commenting on the grief and woes of the hapless Œdipus.

The happiest fate of man is not to be;
And next in bliss is he who soon as born,
From the vain world and all its sorrows free,
Shall whence he came with speediest foot return.

3. Does this solemn judgment of our Lord on Judas, using the same words almost, give colour to the verdict of pessimism? Does it support the theory of the worthlessness of life?

Rather the words of Jesus imply the very opposite—that life is a blessed and glorious thing, a great gift which is also and therefore a great responsibility. Here Judas is stated as a great exception, a burden of guilt and misery so heavy as to counteract the immense value Jesus put upon a single life. It is judgment not on life, but on an evil life, a pronouncement of doom on the waste and tragic failure of a life.

Was it not a true judgment? To have been born, to have tasted both the joy and the power of life, to have grown into manhood and had glimpses of the best possible in life, to have met the Christ and heard His call, to have felt the thrill of response as he turned and followed the highest, to have companied with Jesus and spent days and nights in His fellowship, and then to have ended in this infamy, to have nursed the traitor's heart against all the promptings of his best nature and to have done the traitor's deed—what else could be said of that tragedy but that it had been good for that man if he had never been born?

Those who say that life is not worth living usually mean that it has not enough happiness, or too much unhappiness, in it. But our Lord had other standards of life than that, and judged the worth or the worthlessness of life by other measures. It might be better never to have lived indeed, He held, but for other reasons than because evil days come, when a man may say with truth, I have no pleasure in them. Life meant a great gift with opportunities of being something and becoming something, as well as enjoying something. It is the moral value of a life which judges it, not the personal happiness it contained. Whether life is a blessing or not depends on what we mean by life. From this standpoint we may have had no success and little of the sunshine; we may have nothing to show for all our years of effort; we may have known pain and tasted sorrow, and yet life be eminently worth living. Whereas we may have had our years filled with success and happiness, have hardly known ache or pain, have been quite sure that it was worth our while to live since it brought us so much satisfaction, and yet for the higher ends of life, for the true meaning of living, it may be said that it would have been good if we had never been born.

¶ In *Precious Bane* we have the story of that beautiful character Prudence Sarn. Toiling from daybreak to dark as a mere drudge upon her brother's poor marshy little farm by the Mere, she met all the hardness of her life, its deep sorrows and disappointments, with a marvellous sweetness and strength. Amid the ploughing and sowing, the feeding and the cleaning, she found the glory of Christ, not only the deadly bane that creeps among the corn, poisoning and paralyzing, but also the flowers of God. Her little attic was her sanctuary. 'There was a great wooden bolt on the door, and I was used to fasten it, though there was no need, for the attic was such a lost-and-forgotten place nobody ever came there but the travelling weaver, and Gideon in apple harvest, and me. Nobody would ever think of looking for me there, and it was parlour and church both to me.

'One evening in October I was sitting there, with a rushlight, practising my writing. The moon blocked the little window, as if you took a salver and held it there. All round the walls the apples crowded, like people at a fair waiting to see a marvel. I thought to myself that they ought to be saying one to another, "Be still now! Hush your noise! Give over jostling!"

'I fell to thinking how all this blessedness of the attic came through me being curst. For if I hadna had a hare-lip to frighten me away into my own lonesome soul, this would never have come to me. The apples would have crowded all in vain to see a marvel, for I should never have known the glory that came from the other side of silence.'

Towards the end of the book she has this memorable sentence: 'I ever loved my kind, and I was like one standing at the lane ends with a nosegay to offer to the world as it rode by.'[1]

If we would escape from the doom of Judas we must take our life solemnly as a great gift, thankfully rejoicing in all that is light and sweet and beautiful in it, but also seriously accepting the great moral responsibility of the gift. Even if the joy of life is gone, its duties remain, and its opportunities for service. This is certain, from Christ's standpoint, that if a man's life has been a curse to others, if he has lived to blight and corrupt, it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Remember the stern word of the loving Christ: 'Whoso shall

[1] Mary Webb, *Precious Bane*, 63, 309.

cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'[1]

The Lord's Supper

Mark xiv. 22-24.—'And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many' (R.V.).

The Lord's Supper is a ceremony which symbolizes the end for which the Christian religion was sent into the world. Its intention is to set forth in outward garb the union of God and man 'in Christ' and through the Holy Spirit. To 'abide in Christ,' to have 'Christ in us,' 'dwelling in the heart,' are all so many phrases which point to the great end for which the Lord Jesus Christ became man, died on Calvary, rose again and ascended into heaven. It is as mysterious as it is true. Holy Communion is a symbolic service bringing into a single focus all that Christ intended Himself to be to a man who has faith in Him. It is a picture of that sublime union when a man's life is 'hidden with Christ in God.' It portrays the meeting-point of the Divine with the human in fellowship and oneness. But this union defies analysis. The saints know it by a glad experience; they are baffled to explain it; it is too deep, too high, too subtle, for words.

It is this element of mystery which has given rise to the varied interpretations of the Lord's Supper held by different communities of Christians to-day and in all ages. The needs of men are so different, the satisfactions so complete, that when we have found our longings met we are tempted to say, 'We alone have found the key of the mystery': forgetful that other keys may fit the lock as well as our own. But God fulfils Himself in many ways; He tolerates, mercifully for us, our ignorance and dull misapprehensions; He does not withhold His grace because we err through ignorance. As the Universal Saviour, Christ has to make a universal appeal! In this service He sets Himself forth as the Food of men; and since hunger and thirst are universal, He has used this symbolism of bread and wine because it is a universal language.[1]

The history of this sacrament in the Church is sad reading to the lovers of Christ. Across the Table of Love hot anathemas have been hurled against one another by lovers of the same Lord. Sometimes the Lord's Supper has been kept as if it possessed an almost magical virtue; at other times it has been conceived of as if it had no grace given through it at all. It has been elaborated till all its sweet simplicity has been obscured; it has been simplified till its warmth and comfort have been lost. But it has survived: the bread and the cup, handed by our Lord to the members of His little circle, were passed on by them to their successors, and by one generation to another. And in spite of their long journey across the ages, the gifts come to us with the Master's touch still resting like a benediction upon them.

It is amazing how much of Himself our Lord has put into these simple symbols. How much He brings with Him when He comes! He brings with Him *His holy Incarnation*, for He says, 'This is my body: this is my blood.' Body and blood—that is Incarnation. With these Symbols in our hands we cannot forget that the Word was made flesh. We see before us real substances which represent a real Manhood—no phantom free from mortal relationships but One who in very deed took our nature and lived our life. He brings with Him *His Cross and Passion*, for the bread is broken, the wine is poured out. Unless we are blind indeed, we can see through these things the thorns, the nails, the spear, the self-surrender, the darkness of the desolation, the completeness of the sacrifice. The sacramental act is richer than speech: words, as if ashamed of their inadequacy, flee away. Who can describe Gethsemane or Calvary? But in this way of the Master's appointment they live again before our eyes.

It is as if He said to me,
'As unto thee this bread I break,
So is My Body broken for thy sake;
As unto thee I pour this wine,
So, O My child, shall blood of Mine
Be shed for thee.'

It is as if He said to me,
'As are the bread and wine to thee
So will I be:

[1] Hugh Black, *University Sermons*, 44.

[1] E. J. Ives, *The Pledges of His Love*, 8.

Take thou, and eat the Bread divine!
Take thou, and drink the living Wine,
For only if thou eat and drink of Me,
Thy soul shall live—
Because the Food that I will give
Is Mine Own Life, laid down for thee.'

1. This is *the new Covenant.* This is my blood of the Covenant which is shed for many. A covenant is an agreement: it is something that brings people together. In the Bible story the covenant is the bond of friendship between heaven and earth. There had been an old one written in letters of flame: it had failed because man had failed to carry out his side of it: the prophets dreamed of a new one which should carry with it, in the reality of the Divine grace and mercy, the secret of its own success. In the Upper Room our Lord told His disciples that it had indeed arrived—a better covenant of grace sealed with His own blood.[1]

¶ If the story be true, says Bishop Walpole, that Queen Mary of England in her bitter grief over the loss of Calais, declared that after her death the word 'Calais' would be found written on her heart; it would be still more true to say that 'Africa' was written on Livingstone's heart; 'Melanesia' on Bishop Patteson's; 'Leper' on Fr. Damien's; for they all lived and died for the cause expressed in those words. Nor would it be irreverent to say that the word 'Covenant' was written on Christ's heart, for He died to win it, as His last words show. 'This cup,' He said, 'is the new covenant in my blood.'

Our Lord loved the old well-worn features of the first Covenant of God with His people—the Paschal Lamb, the hymn of joy, the mutual participation, the friendly fellowship; and He clung to this last expression of it, feeble and earthly though it was. With a great longing, He said, have I longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. His words recall the strong desire many a leader has felt to spend the last hours with a band of loyal friends, or the intense eagerness with which a man on the eve of some desperate enterprise snatches an hour's quiet alone with wife and family in the tender intimacies of his home. But his desire for fellowship could not be satisfied by what the Passover gave. The new Covenant spoken of by the prophets was to be a spirit within the disciples, and not an external bond of obligation. The Passover called to mind a great historic redemption carrying with it a determination of the whole people, family by family, to be loyal to God's redeeming love. But the new Covenant excelled the old in that it had the power to secure that loyalty.[1]

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

2. This is *a Memorial of Christ's Death.* Our Lord wished to be remembered. 'Having loved his own he loved them unto the end.' He wished to be remembered by His disciples, and He wishes it still, *for our sakes* as well as for His own. Memory is the gateway of love, and as there is no feeling so elevating to character as love to Christ, so He bids us from time to time keep this feast of recollection, because by doing so our affection is kept vital and we are lifted by it into the atmosphere of what is high and holy and strong.

But the significant thing is that He gave this simple feast not as a memorial of His life but of His death. That was the thing Christ wished to be remembered by—His death: that was the thing He wished His disciples to retain in perpetual remembrance. Is not this a striking and significant thing that Jesus wished to be remembered by His death? There are certain anniversaries which men delight to observe. But these are not days of darkness and disaster and overthrow. It is not defeat men celebrate, but victory. And yet here Jesus institutes a feast to commemorate His death. Here is a feast to keep fresh and vivid in the mind of His people that Cross of ignominy and shame on which He died. He wants to be remembered, not as He spoke on the hillside with an eager throng all about Him; not as He stood up in the boat bidding wind and wave be still; not as the Mighty Healer curing leprosy with a touch, and blindness and deafness with a word: He wants to be remembered as He hung upon the tree, the sport and derision of Jerusalem, the apparently forsaken of God. He wants to be remembered, not as the Great Preacher; not as the Master of Nature; not as the Miracle Worker; but as the Sufferer, the Victim, the Dying Lamb. Is not that an amazing thing?

¶ Dr Chadwick says, 'It is as if our nation exulted in Trafalgar, not in spite of the death of our great Admiral, but solely *because he died*;

[1] G. H. S. Walpole, *Triumphant Love*, 82 ff.

as if the shot which slew Nelson had itself been the overthrow of hostile navies.'

Christ's death was no martyrdom. He laid it down of Himself. And He did not look upon His death as defeat and disaster. He looked upon it as the means of His triumph. We may admire the courage of the martyrs, but nevertheless we deplore their death. But we do not deplore the death of Christ. He did not deplore it Himself. Christ's death was sacrificial—not something He suffered; but it was something which He *did*. It was the mightiest act of His life. And of all things that is what He wishes us to remember. We are to remember His death. For His death was His triumph and His sacrifice was our life.

3. This is *a Sacrament of Friendship*. When the disciples shared this meal with their Master, He declared Himself their friend, and they declared themselves His friends, and pledged themselves, that, come weal come woe, He should always have their love and their devotion.

¶ Do you know, says Dr Jones, what I have been reminded of as I thought of Christ and that little company of eleven sharing this meal together? I have been reminded of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The presence of the Knights at that table was the outward sign and symbol that they had pledged allegiance to Arthur. You remember how Tennyson makes them sing,

> The King will follow Christ, and we the King
> In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
> Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

And these eleven disciples were to Jesus what his Knights were to Arthur.

This Supper is a sacrament of friendship, of Christ's friendship for us, and our friendship for Him. And it is not only a sacrament of friendship between Christ and those who share in it, but it is a sacrament of friendship between one disciple and another.

It is to this dedication of themselves to friendship that the followers of Christ are called. All of us know something of the freedom that comes—the tranquillity and self-realization that comes—when we slip from the company of strangers into the companionship of our intimate friends. And this is Christ's purpose and aim—the spreading and deepening of that experience until it covers the whole earth. If God's glorious and eternal purpose for this Universe is revealed in His Son—its implicit logic is summed up in one tremendous sentence, 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' If in Jesus Christ we have the very mind and act of God, Love is the fulfilling of His Law; friendship has to be the guiding principle for human life in all its relationships; and not until there is fellowship in Christ—between man and man, class and class, race and race—all middle walls of partition being broken down, can Christ begin to have the pre-eminence in all things, and be 'everything and everywhere.' What God offers in Christ is precisely what the world is perishing for lack of: there is a 'famine of love throughout the world,' and nothing less than friendship is good enough for this world which God has made for Himself and given His Son to redeem.[1]

The Triumph Song of Jesus

Mark xiv. 26.—'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.'

THE text opens before us an endless vista of love and beauty. 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out.' Out into the night, out beyond the city walls, across the Kidron valley to Gethsemane. It had been the last meal together, and now this was to be the last walk; and Jesus knew it. It did not need His prophetic vision to see that the crisis was at hand. The morrow must be faced, and unless this dark and cruel city was going suddenly to change its character, He would soon go the way of the prophets before Him.

1. What was the hymn they sang on the night of His betrayal? There is good reason to believe that it was Psalm cxviii. It was especially appropriate to the feast which Jesus observed with His disciples, and it contains the very sentence with which the crowds greeted Him in the streets of Jerusalem, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' It was being sung that night by more than the little group of disciples

[1] J. S. Whale, in *The Purpose of God in the Life of the World*, 177.

in the upper room, but it was far more appropriate than any one but Jesus knew. The steps of His betrayer were even at that moment audible as they passed into the night. The great lonely soul of Jesus sings in the moment of His betrayal; His murderers are ready with their swords and staves, the fires are lit in the hall of Caiaphas; the very Cross is fashioned and Calvary's horror is waiting. It was all arranged; there was no justice about the matter; the verdict was foreordained by those who had schemed to murder Him, and in this terrible moment this is what He sings: 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. . . . This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. . . . God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: Thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.'

The song of Jesus is a song of triumph uttered before the agony came. He knew absolutely that the Father would not fail Him, that evil could not prevail, and that the sacrifice would be a great victory. He could see the whole way right up to Calvary; He knew what He was going to do, and that it must be done alone, and as Peter and John were singing on either side of Him, 'Bind the sacrifice with cords,' He knew that they were going to run away; the moment they stopped singing He told them about that and He knew that He would have to fling His strong arm around them, and beg their lives from His own murderers.

The Bishop of Worcester somewhere says, there was nothing endured by Christ which we may not also be called upon to suffer in our degree. In fellowship with Christ we may be capable of the same grandeur of achievement in our degree; and herein consists the value of this beautiful text, 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out.' There were twelve men singing, but only One of them sang that song as it should be sung. The eleven did not know much about it. They protested their loyalty, their faithfulness, their fervour of devotion, but by-and-by they forsook Him and fled. But that was not the end, thank God. Peter and John and the rest had their chance again, and the time came round when they sang the hymn of Jesus as they had not sung it before, and this was the ring of it: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I am now ready to be offered.' These terror-stricken Galileans who fled from Gethsemane ere long became heroes for the Christ—when they had learned to sing the song of Jesus with His own accent.

As the disciples sang on that last night in the upper room they had little idea how they would look back on it afterwards and what it would mean to them. But that is how we are all placed at all times. We never know really what we are doing, and what it all will come to mean. We never know *how* we shall yet look back upon things that we did and recall the circumstances in which we did them. And later on these may have the power to deliver us one day from some darkness on the way of life or from some amazement.

2. As we ponder the situation one or two things occur to us.

(1) Jesus alone knew that it was the last hymn they would sing together, the last hymn He would sing on earth; and from that point of view it would be a great experience for Him, helping Him doubtless to bear what He had to pass through. He would feel that He stood in the tradition of His fathers, that He was singing with the understanding what He had sung as a child by His mother's side. He would feel, too, that what He was about to do—to lay down His life in love—was no strange thing really; that it was what the best souls of His own beloved people had done in all the ages that were past, though in His own case it was something more than a repetition of their faithfulness. For no one reading the Gospels can fail to see that our Lord perceived, no matter how mysterious it is to us, that, in the words of the prophet, 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

(2) Another thing is that we can often sing when we cannot speak, when we are beyond speaking. It is the expression of something deeper than our reason; it is the fortitude of the soul beset by life. Singing is the play of our higher reason, of our whole being, which is more ancient, more authoritative, more enduring, than is our reason, which is only a late faculty. And so Lord Saltoun was right, who declared that the songs of a nation are a more enduring monument than its laws.

It is, then, good to begin to sing even when one does not feel like singing. For one thing leads on to another, and by singing we are able in some way to assert to our souls things which, for the time being, have been blotted out by clouds. We awake old associations of other days when we could sing, and by the help of a wonderful power which God has given us we actually do begin, for the time being, to possess again all the old things which had gone. We often say we are not in the mood for some fine exercise of the soul; we say we are too sad, too heavy, too bruised and broken. We say we shall wait till the spirit returns to us, forgetting that we are here to invoke the spirit.

This was the charge which Isaiah brought against the people of his day, even the good people. It is true that they also had many reasons for silence towards God. Their country lay desolate, and, like birds before the breaking of a storm, their souls were silent within them. But Isaiah rebuked them because 'no man was calling upon his soul to lay hold on God'; no man was protesting against his own inward silence. On the contrary, they were allowing themselves to be victimized by circumstances, permitting life and the world to strike their souls mute and motionless.

¶ When Cromwell lay dying, and the good people round his bed felt or foresaw the troubles that lay in wait for them and for England, the great man lifted his powerful head and said, 'Is there no one present who will praise the Lord?'

And, further, there is an immeasurable advantage and wisdom in knowing beforehand something which we *can* sing when the darkness falls. It is a great thing to know the language of sincere feeling. There is no one more to be pitied than one who, when all his lights are lowered, has nothing to say. We have many a humble proverb to warn us against the hard consequences of unpreparedness. Our Lord devoted an entire parable as a grave precaution against those who, like the five foolish virgins, had nothing to fall back upon in an emergency. It is a very grave injustice which parents may do their children when they neglect to teach them the language of faith. Later on, those children mix with the world, and the world has its way with them; for there is no body of ideas held together by some hymn, or by the memory of some gracious personality of the Word of God, which would have protested within them against the dominion of mere circumstances and events. Happy are they who have something to fall back upon which takes them nearer to God.

¶ John Newton's mother died when he was only six years of age, and was thus spared the misery of witnessing his early career of vice, folly, degradation. But she was a godly woman, and during these six years she had stored his mind with Divine truth, and her earnest prayers for him had gone up for a memorial before God. These early lessons, he himself records, he never could get rid of, even during the wildest part of his career. Do what he would there they were, stamped indelibly on his soul, and ever and anon they would thrust themselves upon his notice. And when at length his heart was softened, and his spirit bowed to seek the Lord, the words spoken by that gentle mother in the nursery, long years before, came sounding in his ears again, as words of power, and life, and purity.[1]

3. 'When they had sung an hymn, they went out.' There are those who set out into life without a hymn, and the day is coming when they will miss it. And there are those again who have the hymn, yet do not set out. As for those who sing the hymn and do not set out but sit indoors, leaving the world to go on its own sad disastrous way without their rebuke, without their encouragement, without their ministry—these also are to be blamed. They are salt without savour, salt without saltness, salt without contact with the very surroundings which it is its function to penetrate—concerning which salt our Lord in one of His severest sayings declared that it was fit for nothing, that fair-minded men out in the world would trample it under foot, treating it with contempt.

There is only one fine formula for life. It is the formula of this beautiful story which tells us how Jesus and His few puzzled friends 'sang an hymn, and went out'—to meet life.

[1] W. L. Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, 268.

Troubled yet at Rest

Mark xiv. 33.—'And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.'

John xiv. 1.—'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

1. THESE incidents both belong to the few hours between the defection of Judas and the actual betrayal. In both Jesus is alone with His disciples, facing the same terrible prospect of His own agony and their desertion. But this nearness in time and similarity in outward situation only render more amazing the contrast in inward mood. In one, the disciples are filled with dismay, while Jesus is calm and assured, with abundant peace, not alone for His own need, but also for all who trust Him: in the other, His dearest companions are dull of apprehension and heavy with sleep, while Jesus vainly casts Himself upon their sympathy, confessing that His soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

The whole difference has been ascribed to John's peculiar view of Jesus. But he also admits that Jesus was troubled in spirit, or, as we should say, in mind; and he is not alone in thinking that Jesus came to give peace. Mark, no more than John, doubted that Jesus gave victory over fear as well as over sin. And, apart from either, faith in Jesus as a refuge in distress has never been separated from the knowledge that He Himself passed through the depths of dismay. He was acquainted with grief in His soul as well as in His life, not being shielded from its distress any more in mind than in body. Nor would He avail for our need, had He not, in every sense, undergone our experience. Suffering, nevertheless, is not victory. That depends wholly on how it is endured. Had Jesus faced His trials—as many descriptions of Him might lead us to suppose—as a soft, sensitive person, shrinking from life's rough experiences, forgetful of its joys and brooding much on its miseries, keenly but passively enduring its cruelties and its wrongs, He could have been no Captain in any warfare.

¶ Canon Raven, speaking of his own school-days, says: 'This is the time when Jesus the great adventurer, Jesus the perfect example of fortitude, Jesus the Lord of all good life ought to be given to us. As He stands out preparing Himself for His work, challenging the conventions and cowardice of His time, confronting His enemies in quietness and confidence, choosing His road and walking it without fear, facing certain death for the sake of God and His purpose, He would have drawn a boy like me to His feet. He is so plainly the hero that I wanted. If only my teachers had not put a halo on His head, and talked affectedly, or not at all, about Him; if they had treated Him as what He is, the greatest and most alive of the Sons of Men; then the passion pent up within me would have found its object: my affection and my mind would have been His: I should have been given the friend that I was seeking.'[1]

If, throughout His life, Jesus was a man of sorrows of a depth we may never fathom, His pure spirit must also have had joys to which we cannot soar. We catch glimpses of it in His delight in Nature and children and the ways of man, in His supreme insight into the only book He perhaps had much opportunity of reading, in the quietness and absence of hurry amid the tumult of His days, and, above all, in the serenity and security of His fellowship with the Father. Life He met with a hardened body and disciplined mind, which enabled Him to take privations, dangers, oppositions, misrepresentations, as what Chalmers the missionary used to call, 'the pepper and salt of life.' Having the joy of a great cause and the concentration of a great purpose, He was never the victim of trivial anxieties or mean worries or small annoyances, to which men are exposed by unworthy aims and ungirt loins.

2. In reaction from the mistaken gloom of former views, Jesus has more recently been pictured as cheerful, the incarnation of geniality, with an easy, humorous way of disposing of difficulties and a superiority to all austerity. Being a very human picture, there is no temptation to make Jesus mentally any more than physically superior to sufferings, either by impassiveness, as Christian Science, or by omnipotence, as some theologies. While this presentation is of value for reminding us of important elements in the life of Jesus which have too often been overlooked, does it altogether do justice to the intensity of His conflict and the absoluteness of His demands? After no manner, not even the manner of geniality,

[1] C. E. Raven, *A Wanderer's Way*, 28.

does He hold out any hope of peace with life as good in itself and by itself.

On this immediate judgment of life Buddha's view of it as misery is true; and Jesus knew this better than Buddha. The higher the life, the more responsive the feeling and the intenser the sympathies; and, therefore, the more it is exposed to pain. 'The more a man loves,' says Amiel, 'the more he suffers. The sum of possible grief for each soul is in proportion to its degree of perfection.' Even of bodily suffering this is true. A higher mind creates for itself a finer organization with keener sensibilities, while a coarser mind has duller sensations. As Carlyle puts it, 'Stupidity and a good digestion can face much.' Even an excitable mind in a high-strung body has ways of escaping anguish not open to a mind of perfect balance and sanity in a body under perfect discipline and healthy control. But it is neither the bravest nor the most experienced soldier whom excitement renders impervious to danger. For this way of escape Jesus was too strong and self-possessed, too inflexibly resolute in facing reality, and, above all, too familiar with conflict. Thus, neither by hardness nor by exaltation was anything human flesh or spirit could endure ever softened for Him.

And to this agony of body there is the added anguish of mind. Though it could not silence His prayer that they might be forgiven, the hatred of those He would have saved wrapped Him like a flame. And, though it could not sap His confidence in commending His spirit into the hands of His Father, as body and mind were broken in agony, He felt forsaken of God. In those hours miseries were heaped upon Him such as neither Buddha, nor any other mortal, ever experienced, or perhaps had the strength of mind consciously to endure. Yet He drank this bitter cup to the dregs, as appointed by the love of the Father, who is altogether good, and as, therefore, in the deepest sense also good. With agony in every nerve and black darkness upon Hs mind, He yet dreamt of no Nirvana, no cessation of being and pain. The joy set before Him was a present as well as an invincible good, for which He was glad to live and ready to die. From the work given Him to do He never turned His eyes, and nothing necessary for accomplishing it ever ceased to be a joy.

¶ Brainerd tells us in his diary of the beginning of his ministry, and of that deep preparation of heart in which, when yet young, he spent hours and days 'in the power of intercession for precious, immortal souls, for the advancement of the kingdom of my dear Lord and Saviour in the world.' 'I feel,' he continues, 'withal a most sweet resignation, and even consolation and joy, in the thought of suffering hardships, distresses, and even death itself in the promotion of it, and had special enlargement in pleading for the enlightening and conversion of the poor heathen. In the afternoon God was with me of a truth, and it was blessed company indeed. God enabled me so to agonize in prayer that I was quite wet with sweat, though in the shade, and the wind cool. My soul was drawn out very much for the world; *I grasped for multitudes of souls.* And my heart sweetly exulted in the Lord, in the thoughts of any distresses that might alight on me in the advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth.'

3. But was not every element of joy blotted out when He uttered the despairing cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me'? To many it has appeared that this shadowing of the face of the Father may not be ascribed merely to the agony of the Crucifixion, without regarding the faith of Jesus as weaker than that of such human martyrs as Stephen.

¶ Celsus and Julian the Apostate contrasted Jesus, sorrowing and trembling in the garden, with Socrates, the hero of the poison cup, and with other heroes of antiquity, greatly, of course, to the disadvantage of the former. 'Why, then,' said Celsus, scornfully alluding to Jesus' conflict in the garden, 'does He supplicate help, and bewail Himself and pray for escape from the fear of death, expressing Himself in terms like these, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"?'[1]

It has been thought necessary, therefore, to find some other explanation: and two have specially found favour.

(1) The first ascribes it to a supernatural, collective, representative heaping of the world's sin upon His head, under which, as our substitute, He endured such a shadow of the wrath of God as hid from Him the Father's face. But the world's sin is a moral and personal responsibility, and not a massed collective shadow. Nor has such a way of solving a

[1] A. B. Cameron.

moral problem any agreement with the mind of the Father as Jesus revealed it. Above all, this view has not a vestige of support from anything in the narrative.

(2) The other explains the words as an unfinished quotation from the Twenty-second Psalm. Though His dying lips could fashion no more words, they show that His heart was dwelling on such assurances as, 'They trusted in thee and were not ashamed,' on such prayers as, 'Be not far off, O Lord: O thou, my succour, haste thee to my help,' and on such promises as, 'Let your heart live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord.' Yet the words are there by themselves, and it is difficult to suppose that those who reported them thought them other than a cry from the depths. And, if we take it as they did, must it not be as a cry from the great darkness which had wrapped for the moment His anguished mind, to which we must add nothing and in which we must explain nothing, but accept it simply as expressing the most terrible experience of His awful ordeal?

¶ An old Greek litany supplicates Christ by 'His known and unknown sufferings.' Who shall say how much the first were exceeded by the last, or fathom the depth of those words, 'He tasted death for every man'? [1]

And, yet, when all this has been said, we have not wholly done away with the significance of the fact that this cry of dismay is a quotation from a Psalm of assurance and hope, for there is nothing more marvellous in the mind than the penumbra of light which may surround the blackest centre of eclipse. Does it not show that the sun of His faith still shone behind, His heart still at peace though His mind was overshadowed? God was still the great reality and was still His God, and though like a child in the night He had lost His hand, like a child also He stretched forth His arm, to find again its strengthening hold.

> And, though the strife be sore,
> Yet in His parting breath
> Love masters Agony: the soul that seem'd
> Forsaken, feels her present God again,
> And in her Father's arms
> Contented dies away.

While our Lord suffered without and within all we can endure, and that with a specially poignant distress, He never turned His face from life, or resented God's appointment for Him in it, or thought it aimless or senseless misery, or desired to escape from it into a passionless existence. Though for the moment His conscious thought was a black desolation, deep in His heart was the shining light of a Psalm of hope and assurance and the turning of man to God, the joy of it immediately blazing up into confident surrender of His spirit into the Father's hands. And where else may our faith plant its last tottering footstep as we ascend through the storm and darkness of time to the light and peace of the life eternal; where else can we rest assured that there is no ill over which the Cross is not God's victory, and no way so dark as to be deprived of His peace, except in that dismayed but finally triumphant question?

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope*, 64.

Failure.

Mark xiv. 37.—'And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest not thou watch one hour?'

WHAT is the meaning of these words? The disciples by the light of the moon pass into the wood, staying near the main road; Peter, James and John going farther within. Why should they watch and pray? Is it that in these last hours Jesus is eager to be given some time to fight His battle in communion with His Father in heaven, to receive from God insight into the full meaning of what is to befall Him and strength to bear it? His was a conflict in which no stranger dared intrude, and so He withdrew Himself even from the chosen three. It was desirable that the spying emissaries of the priests should not come upon Him without warning. This probably explains in part the words of Jesus. His enemies were approaching and He desired time for undisturbed fellowship with God, and when the soldiers came He was to be given warning of their approach. There was another reason. In the agonizing strife He longed for the company of those men who, in spite of their frailties, were His dearest and best friends. The animal receives a mortal wound and steals to its lonely lair to die alone, but man, in his last hour, is comforted by the presence of faithful ones who, by their prayers and companionship, support the soul ere it takes flight. Could ye not watch

with Me one hour? Could ye not in prayer support Me, in love surround Me? [1]

Here at the very crisis of His need Jesus found them wanting. It was not simply that they fell asleep—that might be only physical exhaustion. Their sleeping was only a part of the experience of the whole night of their Master's trial. By and by, after a moment's outburst of Peter's fruitless anger, when he cut off the high priest's servant's ear, they all forsook their Lord and fled. Drawn to Him still, even although he would not own Him, Peter still lingers around the place where Christ is being tried, and there at last denies Him. Not one of them is ready to stand by his Master bravely and help Him carry His heavy cross to Golgotha. That utter failure of the disciples on the night of Christ's great trial is one of the strangest and most significant events in all the gospel story. When He needed them most He looked for them in vain.

Ah, the first bitterness is over now!
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on; that was a pang.[2]

Why did the disciples fail Jesus in the supreme moment?

1. First, because their will-power gave way in the crisis. They had not counted on so long or so hard a road. There were reproach and hazards of which they had never dreamed in those evenings by the Sea of Galilee, when the sun was all a glory of red and yellow over the Judean hills. Although will-power is not as strong as subtle, instinctive forces within us, nevertheless there are times when only iron restraint can save us. General Gordon, who met his death in the Soudan beneath the spears of the Mahdi, was once led to a room full of treasure and told by high Chinese officials that this treasure would be his if he would countenance certain dishonourable practices. Iron will developed in desert marches, in fighting disease, and in upholding the Empire's honour in three continents, came forward to save him and gave him power to refuse. There are unexpected tests, crises for which no one is prepared, temptations for which no one has developed a specific defence; and, when the rush of circumstances is upon one, all one can do is to fall back in determination upon a former dedication and pray for strength to hold fast.

2. Again, they failed Him because they were unable to share His dreams. There was no set to their minds to carry them onward in the midst of the gathering storm, and they slumbered and slept, insensitive to the immense significance of that night in the life of Jesus. They did not realize that for the sake of His dream of a new era in human existence Jesus committed His all, and God's all, to a farcical trial and a savage crucifixion as the utmost which love could do in redeeming men. The sheer unthinking dullness and the inability of His friends to use their imagination hurt Jesus more than all else. It was a time for great faith and great friendship, and Jesus received vacillating indifference.

¶ Although Cecil Rhodes may be blamed for a crass and material imperialism, his steadfastness in holding to a dream of a united South Africa under the British flag is one of the outstanding dreams of Empire of the last century. Down at the Kimberley Club, as his intimates grouped about him at night, he was wont to take down a great map of Africa, and, placing his hands on the territory beyond Cape Colony up to the central lakes, he would exclaim: 'All that shall be red; that is my dream.' And through long years of fragile health and immense difficulty he held to this dream, which was finally realized.[1]

But His disciples did not lose the battle that night; they had lost it long before. Their action on the fatal evening had been prepared for in the previous weeks. What we think to-day we shall do to-morrow; what we are at twenty we are apt to be at forty, only more so. Weeks of spiritual slackness, even if in the presence of Christ, had made easy their action on Jesus' night of agony.

It is difficult to keep a dream undimmed when trouble comes:

To hope till hope creates from its own wreck
The thing it contemplates.

To believe in a cause when it is under foot and trampled upon, to cherish an ideal of a world state when it is defeated by the largest majority against any issue in the history of mankind, to

[1] A. Chisholm, *High Roads and Cross Roads*, 67.
[2] Browning, *Colombe's Birthday*.

[1] G. Stewart, *The Crucifixion in our Street*, 162.

follow Christ closely when He is alone in the garden, sweating great drops of blood and grappling with the issues of life and death. Little did this sleepy group know that later generations would frame the prayer :

By thine agony and bloody sweat,
Good Lord, deliver us.

The supreme crisis in human history was approaching; the greatest single manifestation of God's outreaching love was about to be set forth, but this insensitive group was unable to keep vividly before them the dream of the Kingdom which Christ had come to establish.

3. Not only did their wills and their dreams give out, but also their belief. They had lost faith in themselves and left Jesus alone without their presence. Many of us develop a sense of inadequacy, and feel that we are useless to the world and to God. Jesus offers the world a conception of human personality which says to each, 'You are precious, you are valuable, you are loved.' But on this ghastly night these men, who could have meant so much by their mere companionship, had no confidence in themselves. They had lost sight of what they had to offer of friendship in His hour of tribulation.

We must believe in ourselves in order to help God. The Son of God is lonely now as He was in Gethsemane for responsive human hearts. And we must believe in Jesus. He asks men to give their wills, their dreams, their faith, to Him. He promises, in return, not ease or comfort, but, perchance, the promise to Garibaldi's Red Shirts, 'forced marches, battles, and death,' but in the end that spiritual victory which shall overcome the crassness and brutality of the world.[1]

The Traitor

Mark xiv. 43, 44.—'And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.'

JUDAS has become the name for everything that is base and treacherous in the human heart. In Dante's great poem, when the pilgrim of the other world reaches to the last post of hell, there in the middle of the frozen ice he finds Lucifer, the ultimate spirit of Evil, and in the central mouth of his three loathsome mouths he sees the body of Judas Iscariot half devoured.

¶ It was over and over again forbidden by the Church that a child should be baptized by the name of Jude. To this day the name probably does not exist outside Mr Hardy's novel. With regard to great sinners in general, and Judas in particular, the feeling was, 'I will not make mention of their names within my lips,' 'Let his name be clean put out.'[1]

1. The chief incidents in the story of Judas are familiar to everyone. We remember how, a few days before the betrayal, Mary broke her box of spikenard over the feet of Jesus and anointed Him, and how, when the odour of the ointment filled the room, there was a sorrowful silence, a silence broken by the voice of Judas—'Could not this ointment have been sold?' We feel that even then the man who could say such a thing when he said it, has already betrayed the Saviour of the world.

Then we all know the miserable story of his going away by night and holding communications with the enemies of Jesus; and how he came to terms with them, agreeing for thirty pieces of silver to hand over Jesus.

We are told by St John that from the very beginning Jesus knew at least this possibility in Judas: and presently we shall ask what may have been our Lord's purpose in associating with Himself one in whose heart there lurked such sinister things; though it is enough for us to remember that Christ came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He came to the world because there are Judases in it—because there are those who have it in them to be Judases, but concerning whom Christ never ceased to believe that they had it in them to be something totally different. And so we never read of any action on our Lord's part towards Judas of a kind to depress him or make him feel that he was living under the eye of a critical and censorious Master, who would be glad to find him out indulging himself in his own weakness. On the contrary, we may believe that it was our Lord's hope—indeed, we know that it was His hope at the very end—that His own behaviour

[1] G. Stewart, *The Crucifixion in our Street*, 158.

[1] R. L. Gales, *Studies in Arcady*, 181.

towards Judas would have the effect of softening his heart and turning him from his dark purposes.

Christ washed the feet of Judas!
Yet all his lurking sin was bare to Him,
His bargain with the priests, and more than this,
In Olivet beneath the moonlight dim
Aforehand knew and felt his treacherous kiss.

At the Supper on the eve of the betrayal our Lord took bread and handed a piece of it to Judas, in that act making the last overture of peace and love, saying in effect, 'I know all that is passing in your mind, but in spite of it all, nay, because of it all, I stretch out My hand to you and give you this token of My readiness to be your friend.' An action like that must either save or damn a man to whom it is shown. His heart must either break under it, or become dark and cold. This is always the effect of pure goodness in the world. It is like a magnetic current turned on amongst particles of iron. They are attracted or repelled. Later we read that Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and His presence there between them softened the heart of the one and hardened the heart of the other. It made one pray and the other curse.

We read that Judas received the sop and went out to have his last conference with the men who were paying him to betray Jesus. First of all, they arranged the force that was to seize Christ in the garden. It consisted for the most part of the Temple Guard, with servants of the priests. And these were armed with cudgels and small swords. But, partly because they were conscious that Christ possessed some mysterious power, and partly because they wished to conciliate Pilate, who would have resented resort to force in Passover Week, they asked for reinforcements in the shape of a detachment of garrison soldiers. The negotiations with Pilate probably took some little time, but at length a detachment was sent, and everything was ready for the arrest. One thing only remained to arrange, and that was a sign by which the soldiers should know whom to seize. With only the light of the moon, and under the dark shadow of the olive trees, it would have been easy to make a mistake and to arrest the wrong man. So the sign Judas arranged with his following was this, 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he; take him and lead him away safely.'

¶ Thackeray tells us, in *Vanity Fair*, how Mr Osborne turned against his old friend Sedley when the latter came into the Bankruptcy Court. Though Sedley had been the making of him in earlier days, he became now his bitterest foe, excusing his ingratitude by working himself into a furious rage against him and blackening his character all round. So was it now with Judas. He persuaded himself he had a bitter grudge against the Master. He recalled fancied slights he had received, and when Jesus finally dismissed him at the Supper table, saying, 'That thou doest do quickly,' he went away a demon-possessed man, and determined on the infamous sign which was to seal his act of revenge.[1]

Judas, dost thou betray Me with a kisse?
Canst thou find hell about My lips, and misse
Of life just at the gates of life and blisse?[2]

We know what followed. It is a dreadful thing to have succeeded in evil. One who has succeeded in an evil thing is not at the end of his course: he is at the beginning of it. So it was with Judas. Remorse took hold of him. The thirty pieces of silver blistered his hands. He went back to those who had paid him—as though they could undo what had passed. But they mocked at his display of feeling, and Judas hurried from their presence; whereupon he was overtaken by a tremendous wave of moral shame, in the madness of which he destroyed himself.

2. That is the story of Judas. There are two questions which that story raises in our minds.

(1) There is the question as to why Jesus ever attached a man like Judas to Himself; for we are explicitly told that our Lord was aware of the kind of man Judas was, from the beginning. There must have been something in Judas—something to the eye of Jesus—which made it always a possible thing that *that* and not the more sinister aspect of his life would one day gain the victory. Who knows whether in that wild tragedy of his own death, when with a loud cry he flung himself out of life, who knows

[1] W. M. Mackay, *The Men Whom Jesus Made*, 203.
[2] George Herbert.

whether it was not the higher Judas who next moment stood before the face of God.

(2) And then, being the man he was, why did our Lord allow him to have charge of the money of the little band of disciples? If money was Judas' weakness, why did our Lord place such a temptation in his way?

Well, again we must remember that Christ came into the world to save us: not to carry us out of our temptations, not to gloze over the unworthy things in our life; but to enable us to face ourselves and to gain the mastery over ourselves in those very particulars of our own personal life where the mastery is most difficult.

¶ No combination of all the natural forces in the planet can vie for one moment with the potentialities of the human volition. In its secret chamber we can force destinies. The combination of freedom and necessity that goes on there is a mystery we shall probably never explain. The nearest approach to it, perhaps, is in the formula of Hegel: 'It is only as we are in ourselves that we can develop ourselves, yet is it we ourselves that develop ourselves.' Despite the dense sophistical webs that have been woven round this subject, man has always believed in his freedom.[1]

3. We must not turn the edge of this tragic story by saying to ourselves that Judas was such an outrageously evil character that his experience has no guidance for ourselves. Judas was not a foredoomed villain. He was at the outset an average man with his particular bias, as we all have a particular bias; but he was one who, it would appear, never allowed Christ to deal with the real personal basis of his own life. He associated with Jesus; he must have spoken to Him again and again every day for three years. He was officially interested in the movement; and yet he allowed himself to remain what he was, nay, to go on hardening his heart against Jesus.

Explanations have been offered as to what may have prompted Judas finally to betray Jesus; and although it does not relieve the guilt of Judas, it helps to bring the moral process which corrupted Judas nearer to ourselves. It has been said—and this was the view which De Quincey held—that Judas in betraying Jesus had no other wish than to force His hand. The idea then would be that Judas was a man who associated with Jesus because the Cause of Christ seemed to promise him a career. He took literally certain words of prophecy which Jesus applied to Himself, and believed that in Jesus he saw the leader and king of a great national movement; that in this kingdom of the world which Jesus was to inaugurate, he, Judas, would hold a place of power. But the days kept passing. He saw Jesus losing opportunities, he saw Him refusing to exercise His supernatural power, and so he resolved to bring things to a head. He thought that if he could bring Jesus face to face with death, Jesus would then summon His hidden resources and take His power and reign.

If this be the true explanation, then it conveys its own grave warning against the various forms in which we also may be serving Christ for some consideration. In that case Judas would be the type of man who is prepared to serve Christ so long as it is convenient, so long as it promotes his prosperity or does nothing to hinder it; but the type of man who, the moment the true nature of the Christian life becomes obvious—that soon or late it is a summons to some form of self-crucifixion—forsakes his Master and abjures his allegiance.

Finally, however, let us not forget that on till the very end our Lord held out a hand to save this man whom He saw sinking from His side. And so, even as we recall his story, let us turn our eyes from the tragedy of it all, and see not merely the fate of Judas, but the outstretched friendly hand of Him whom Judas betrayed.[1]

[1] J. Brierley.

The Young Man in the Linen Cloth

Mark xiv. 51, 52.—'And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.'

This is a strange story. It is told by St Mark alone, and he introduces it very abruptly and mysteriously. Who was that young man? Whence had he come? And why was he thus strangely attired? Surely, if the incident was worth recording, the Evangelist might have done more justice to it. It is a puzzling story, intruding, as it does, into the tragic narrative.

The Lord Jesus had been arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane by the officers of the

[1] J. A. Hutton, *There They Crucified Him*, 79.

High Priest, who are here called ' young men,' a technical name for the servants of the synagogues. As He was being led a prisoner through the streets of Jerusalem to the palace of Caiaphas, a certain youth, roused probably by the uproar, and, it may be, sleepless through some fear, sprang from his bed, seized the first wrapper that came to hand, and, hastily folding himself in it, ran out into the moonlight to learn what the cause of disturbance was. As he ran after and caught up the retiring group of officers, he saw they had a prisoner in their midst, and in the prisoner he recognized Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi to whom no doubt he had listened with delight as He taught in the Temple and in the streets; for, we are told, he was following *Him*, not simply following the crowd. In *Him* his interest is so great, so obvious, that it compels him to remonstrate with the officers who had arrested Him, or to address words of comfort and hope to their prisoner. For the officers, irritated by his too obvious sympathy with Jesus, lay hold upon him, and are about to arrest him as a follower of the Galilean Rabbi. But for *this* the young man is not prepared. By a sudden wrench he extricates himself from the grip of his captors, leaving his linen sheet in their hands.

1. Who was this young man? Several guesses have been made at his identity. But in all probability St Mark is telling a story about himself. Indeed, so many lines of argument combine to point to this, that the conjecture seems to become almost a certainty.

(1) This way of referring to himself is quite in keeping with the manner of the Gospel narrative. In the Gospel that goes by his name, John speaks of many incidents in which he himself took part. But he never mentions himself directly by name. He speaks of himself in an indefinite way as ' the disciple whom Jesus loved,' or ' the other disciple.' That is the manner of the Evangelists when they speak of themselves—they do so obliquely, vaguely. And for Mark to speak of himself in this way as ' a certain young man ' is in strict accord with Gospel usage.

(2) Then there is nothing in the incident to account for its insertion into the narrative unless it be a personal interest. If he himself was the young man that sprang up in the dead of the night, and saw Jesus led by the officers to be tried by the High Priest, we can understand with what profound interest he would afterwards recall every detail of that incident, and how gladly, when he wrote his Gospel, he would connect himself with that supreme crisis in the history of his Lord. The minute details crowded into one brief sentence look as if they could be drawn only from personal recollection. As we read it, we can see the young man lying on his couch; we can hear the brawl in the street that awakes him; we see him start up, and snatch at the first covering that comes to hand, cast it hastily about him, run out into the moonlit street, recognize Jesus, and interfere impulsively with the officers in the execution of their duty; we see him roused to a sense of his danger as they lay rough hands upon him, and run away, leaving the costly linen robe in their hands. Even the peculiar character and value of ' the linen cloth ' is indicated by the term used to describe it. It is called a *Sindon* in the Greek; and hence we know that it was one of those fine Indian fabrics woven in Scinde, which the ancients held in great esteem, and in which the Jews were wont, if they were rich enough, to wrap their dead when they prepared them for the tomb. That the writer should crowd such an amount of minute detail into the account suggests that he was speaking of an event which happened to himself.

(3) We know from the Acts of the Apostles that the mother of Mark had a house in Jerusalem, so that Mark, unlike most of the disciples and friends of Jesus, would be living in Jerusalem, and perhaps in that very street through which Jesus was led on the night of His betrayal. From the fact, moreover, that this house of Mark's mother was spacious enough to be the habitual resort of the primitive Church, we infer that she was a woman of some wealth and consideration; a woman, therefore, in whose house a costly Indian fabric, such as the young man cast about him, might well lie ready to his hand.

(4) It must be noted, too, that the character of this young man—a man of fine impulses, of generous enthusiasm, but lacking in steadfastness and strength—accords entirely with what we know of Mark as told us by St Luke.

2. Mark was a man of this kind—a man who was apt to begin to build without counting the cost. He was of an eager, sensitive, and

impressionable temperament. Probably his imagination was very keen and active, and painted the beauty and heroism of a certain line of conduct very brightly, but painted just as darkly the terrors of the conflict which to pursue such a line of conduct would involve. And so he would be easily moved to undertake enterprises which he was not strong enough to carry through. Here he is drawn to Christ in the hour of His greatest sorrow and peril. It seems intolerable that he should hold back from this Teacher who had touched his heart when that Teacher was being led away to judgment. And he resolved to follow Him, and to interpose on His behalf. But no sooner are the rough hands of the guard laid upon him than he feels, quite as keenly, what shame and pain he must suffer if he follow the Nazarene to the court-house, and what his mother must endure if he should lose his freedom in a mere fit of enthusiasm. For we must remember that as yet Mark was not an avowed disciple of Christ. In his First Epistle St Peter calls him, 'Mark, *my son*'; and, according to a frequent New Testament usage, the phrase probably implies that Mark was a convert of Peter's. So it was not the loyalty of an avowed disciple which moved him, on the night of the betrayal, to spring from his bed and follow Jesus. It was simply the fine impulse which constrains men of a sensitive and quickly-kindled temperament to side at all odds with oppressed innocence.

That was a noble impulse, and impulse is one of the finest qualities of youth. And what is impulse? It is an act of the heart rather than of the will, a spontaneous movement of the soul. It is impulse that makes us love, and justifies itself by creating love in others. It is impulse that prompts the man who has never dreamed of doing anything heroic when he rose at morn to leap into the running tide to rescue some poor soul he never saw before, and does not even know. It was such an impulse that made this young man suddenly range himself on the side of Christ in the moment when all others had deserted Him. For one brief, glorious moment he was the only human soul in all this world of men who dared to stand with Jesus. Quicker than we can describe it, the whole drama was over; there was no time for reason or debate. And who does not justify, and who will not applaud, the impulse? It is in such Divine moments of intense feeling that we see the narrow way to eternal life, and as we look back upon them we know that

> Just this or that poor impulse,
> Which for once had play unstifled,
> Seems the whole work of a lifetime
> That away the rest has trifled.

But, to live the Christian life, in addition to enthusiasm we must have convictions, we must be men of rock-like steadfastness. So we watch this young man's career to see if his enthusiasm will die out, and his devotion to Jesus disappear, or his will be so strengthened that he becomes a brave and faithful follower of his Lord.

3. When Mark was a little older, and was an avowed servant of Christ, we see again this same unsteadfast poise of spirit between conflicting impulses, the same sensitive apprehension of the lions that lurk in the path of devotion to any great cause. He started with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, just as he rose from his bed to follow Christ to the hall of judgment through the streets of Jerusalem; but just as he forsook Christ when the officers laid their rude grasp on him, so also he abandoned Paul and Barnabas before their work was well begun. When he left them, they were about to plunge into the wild mountains of Asia Minor, to encounter 'perils of rivers and perils of robbers' among the lawless and marauding highland clans. Mark did not like the prospect. And so, just as they were about to face their gravest perils, and to win their greatest successes, he forsook them and returned to his mother's comfortable house in Jerusalem.[1]

In his next missionary journey Paul would not have him as a companion, but he did not give up his missionary enthusiasm because of this. He went into the field with his relative Barnabas, and we know that, in the course of years, he was a great source of strength to the Churches. We find Paul writing to Timothy—'Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.' The man whom once Paul discarded as useless and worthless he sends for now as being profitable to him for ministering. We can imagine him saying when they met, 'Forgive me that I doubted thee'; and if we know anything of human nature, Mark's cup of joy was full when Paul placed his con-

[1] S. Cox, in *The Expositor*, i. 442.

fidence in him once again. The mere sending for him just then argued boundless confidence in John Mark's courage and devotion. For Paul was in prison in Rome, and the end was near. Fair-weather friends had been leaving him, until only Luke was left to stand by him. It was under those circumstances that Paul sent for Mark, and it argues immense confidence in him to believe he would be ready to come, ready to stand by Paul's side in Rome, at the risk of imprisonment, and even of death. This is a very different man from the John Mark who ran away from Pamphylia. And yet the same. To his warm-hearted enthusiasm he had added courage and patience. With resolute purpose he witnessed a good confession in Cyprus, Colosse, and in Rome, and at last laid down his life for Christ in the streets of Alexandria.

¶ Historians tell how in the sixteenth century a naval engagment took place off the north coast of Italy between the fleets of Genoa and Venice, at which the Genoese sustained a crushing defeat. The beaten admiral drew off for some days to repair damages, but, when that was done, he immediately ordered sail to be set for the scene of the former battle. 'What,' said his officers, 'return to the place where we were routed?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'it was rendered famous by our defeat, and I wish to make it immortal by our victory.' [1]

Like St Mark, we have again and again abandoned the Master we profess and wish to serve. And at times we lose all hope of ever reaching that steadfast loyalty to Him which we long to reach. At such times it will give us new heart to remember that God is always ready to restore us and to train us by our very failures. We, too, like John Mark, out of weakness can be made strong.

Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

Peter's Fall

Mark xiv. 54.—'And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.'

It has happened once and again to most of us to stand struck with astonishment at the sudden, and seemingly almost causeless, appearance in our own or other people's lives of some exceptional manifestation of strength or beauty of capacity, or some staggering incompetence or failure. Something has happened, in the case of someone whom we flattered ourselves we knew, that has thrown into confusion all our ideas of cause and effect. Someone whom we imagined we could read like an open book has suddenly stepped forth before our astonished eyes as we never dreamt to see him; as when a man, for example, whose integrity we could have vouched for, has suddenly become a mark for all fingers as a rogue. And the thing that has baffled us most, as we have sought to explain to ourselves the ruin of a character that had seemed so fair, has been the apparent feebleness of the temptation, the slightness of the difficulty, which brought about the wrongdoing and the wreck.

Or, again, we have an acquaintance whose leading characteristic is a shrinking sensitiveness, which has led him consistently, through many years, to hold aloof from every kind of public activity. But to our astonishment, and in response to what appears a by no means urgent necessity, he suddenly assumes the part of a leader and advocate in a despised and unpopular cause, and in that capacity shows a degree of boldness which leaves us bewildered and disposed for the time to question our own power to form a judgment.[1]

These acts, however, if we could only trace their causes, are not so sudden as they seem. The conversion of Saul, for instance, was from one point of view amazingly sudden and unexpected—it was so much so that the Christians could not persuade themselves it had actually taken place. But was it really as sudden as it looked? The vision on the way to Damascus was the explosion that laid Saul's Pharisaism in ruins; but who can read the seventh chapter of Romans, with its story of spiritual conflict, without seeing that there had been years of preparation for the mighty change?

It is very much like that with Peter's fall. From our point of view it is sudden, unexpected, startling. Peter was the last man we should have thought of as likely to betray or deny his Lord. He was in many ways the bravest of the Twelve; he was devotedly attached to Christ, and only a few hours before the denial he had

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, 70.

[1] H. H. Oakley.

declared himself ready to go with Him to prison and to death; and he meant it. Then, in the High Priest's hall, at the taunt of a serving-maid, a ghastly collapse took place, and Peter swore he did not know his Lord. It looks as sudden and unexpected as an earthquake. And yet it was not so sudden as it seemed. Peter's fall had a history. The ultimate causes of it run far back into Peter's life. But, if we want only to discover the immediate causes they are here. We listen to Peter saying after his Lord's warning, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' His self-confidence and boastfulness are preparing him for a fall. And this self-centred confidence is manifested by putting himself into contrast with his brethren. We cannot altogether put down the Apostle's panic and apostasy to the terrible and overpowering nature of the circumstances in which he suddenly found himself. Though his position certainly was serious, it was not a situation of which the natural and to-be-expected outcome—for a man who was at all what Peter imagined himself to be—was passionate repudiation of his Lord. But Peter was not aware, by any means, of all that was in himself. His shameful denial of Jesus was the effect of a sudden combination of certain trying circumstances with a spirit of overweening and boastful confidence in his own fidelity which had been steadily growing in his warm and honest heart.

We see from this that temptation has a subjective as well as an objective side. We talk too often as if temptations were definite concrete things, intrinsically and inevitably hurtful, or sugar-coated poisons. Correctly speaking, there is no such thing as a temptation in the sense that it is tempting always and to everyone. Our Lord declared that to Him the prince of this world came, and had nothing in Him. The Scribes and Pharisees marvelled that He should keep company with publicans and sinners and still lay claim to holiness. They knew that they could not do so. And we know that they could not, and the reason why; and we know and rejoice that He could. It is only the evil within us that gives any power to the evil without. Even of those who would live well and whose sins are their grief, it is true that—

> The devil tempts us not—'tis we tempt him,
> Beckoning his skill with opportunity;

while of the reckless it is said, all too truly, that they 'offer themselves to Satan for a prey.'

¶ If the play of *Macbeth* exhibits solicitation from without, it also exhibits, with an equal clearness, that such solicitation is powerless unless it finds an answering chord within. There is no suggestion in the drama that wife or witches forced Macbeth. He never, even in his wildest moods, shifts responsibility to them. They struck a chord which was already vibrating. They added fuel to a kindled fire. They gave form to dim and formless things, already lurking and stirring in his soul.

Why did he 'start' when he heard the witches' prophecies? Banquo heard them entirely unmoved. Why instantly did he betray fear? Why was he 'rapt' as men are in revelations? To Macbeth this was a revelation, not of the hell without him but of the hell within him, where already, unseen by any eye, there were movings towards things he dare not name.[1]

1. One mistake that Peter made is suggested by the first phrase of the text, 'And Peter followed him *afar off*.' His temptation found him at the ebb-tide of devotion. It may be that his sensibilities were dulled by previous days and nights of anxiety and foreboding. Like the rest of the disciples Peter and John had been seized with panic and fled, but their panic did not last very long. They recovered courage enough to make them wish to watch developments. And so Peter, instead of running away, began to follow the procession back to the city, which speaks well for his affection and his love. But he 'followed him *afar off*,' and that was his undoing. He allowed the lines of communication to be cut; and we all know that the efficiency of an army depends absolutely on keeping open the lines of communication with its base. If those lines get broken and the army at the front can receive no supplies either of food or ammunition, there is no prospect before it except either starvation or surrender. Now, Peter had allowed himself to be cut off from his base of supply. That base was Jesus Christ. At Jesus Christ's side, in touch with Him, Peter was brave enough for anything. 'Even if I must die with thee,' he had said to Jesus, 'yet will I not deny thee.' Granted that there is more than a touch of boastfulness about it, nevertheless Peter meant

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Christ in Shakespeare*, 74.

exactly what he said. And we believe that at that moment he would cheerfully have faced death for his Lord. He was in closest touch with Him just then. But now he had allowed himself to be separated and followed Him 'afar off.' And so it was that Peter, trusting his own unaided strength, denied his Lord.

Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
'I never *will* deny thee, Lord,'
But 'grant I never *may*.'

Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.[1]

¶ When Frith, the Master of Cambridge, was had up before Henry VIII. on the charge of heresy, for saying that the doctrines of Transubstantiation and Purgatory were scholastic, and not evangelical, and therefore not necessary for eternal salvation, Henry said he would have to be burnt. Frith had a serving boy, a 'scout' they generally call them at Cambridge, and this boy was had up with him in court. When they turned to the boy and said: 'Well, and what do *you* believe?' the poor lad was only fourteen, but he said, 'Please, *I* believe the same as my dear master Frith!'[2]

Many defections and falls besides the Apostle's are caused by losing touch with Christ. If we are given over to doubts, if we lack assurance, if we fail to respond to the call of duty, if we find ourselves disheartened, if the fine edge of our devotion is dulled, it is because we have severed the vital bond.

¶ The late Dr G. H. Morrison[3] was greatly impressed by what he saw in a paper-mill which he had visited as a boy. Speaking to the children one morning on Ph. iv. 13, he said: 'I don't know if you have ever seen over a paper-mill, but if you have not, you ought to try to see one, because it is extraordinarily interesting. Well, here was a great steel roller, and on it was being wound great sheets of paper. It was either cartridge-paper, or blotting-paper, and as you will all understand, there was a great deal of electricity generated by the friction, and on the wall near the roller there was a gas bracket.

'There was no electric light in those days . . . but here on the wall was a gas bracket with no globe on it . . . and then the workman who was attending to the roller . . . first of all turned on the gas—did not light it, but just turned it on, and it came hissing from the burner—and then he put one hand, one knuckle on the roller, and held up his other hand to where the gas was hissing, and to my intense astonishment, with that knuckle he lit the gas. I have never forgotten that all these years. Don't you see, if his hand had been in his pocket, or if his hand had been on my head, he never could have lit the gas, but then, his one hand was on the roller, and though he did not feel anything except a little prickling, tides of electricity were pouring through his body, and with the other knuckle he lit the gas. He had no match, he had no taper. . . .

'That is exactly what happens when you keep in touch with God. Things you could never do of yourself, lights you could never kindle of yourself, somehow you can accomplish if with the one hand you are touching the roller, if with your heart you are keeping in touch with God.'

2. Another mistake of Peter's was to put himself into the danger zone. Very likely he 'hung about' the court for a season, timidly looking in and wondering if in the dusk and the commotion he might venture in undetected. At length his curiosity and affection won the mastery, and he entered in and sat with the officers. That is to say, he went and sat with the very men who had seized Christ in the garden, and who would very likely be talking over the course of events even when Peter came and sat amongst them. Whatever was worthy in his original impulse and purpose, he appears to have made himself at home in a very equivocal situation. John was as near to the enemies of Jesus as was Peter that night, but he was wholly out of sympathy with them, his heart was with the Prisoner at the bar. Not so Peter. He was with the enemies of Jesus, and for the time being desired to be accounted one of them. And as a result he fell shamefully.

Our safety against sin lies in being afraid of it. There is all the world of difference between foolhardiness and courage. The man who deliberately thrusts himself in the way of temptation puts a spark to any evil prompting

[1] Cowper.
[2] A. H. Stanton, *Faithful Stewardship*, 141.
[3] *Twenty-five Talks with Boys and Girls.*

that may be within himself. 'Lead us not into temptation,' our Lord taught us to pray. And the man who really knows himself will pray it constantly and earnestly, for the man who knows himself knows his own weakness.

¶ There is a story told of William of Orange that, as he was watching one of the many battles he fought against the French power, he suddenly found a wealthy London merchant by his side. 'What are you doing here, sir?' said the king, 'do you not know that you risk your life?' 'I run no more risk than you, sire,' replied the merchant. 'True,' answered the king, 'but duty brings me here; duty does not bring you'; and the words were scarcely out of the king's mouth before a shot laid the foolhardy merchant dead at his feet.[1]

When we accommodate ourselves to a false position we thoughtlessly ignore the inevitable penalties of our unfaithfulness. Peter seems to have become blind and reckless as to the consequences of his presumption and folly. How rapidly he went down in character! Thrice denying his Master, and each time exhibiting himself in a worse light. An American writer, treating of the rapid descent of those who fail commercially and socially, observes, 'When one begins to come down hill, it seems as if everything had been greased for him.' This is still more manifestly true in degeneration of character.

3. Another mistake Peter committed was to go to the High Priest's palace in a spirit of disappointment and despair. As another Evangelist puts it, he went to see the end. His hopes had all gone out when he saw his Lord in the hands of his foes. All his dreams of crowns and thrones vanished, and his hope in Christ's Messiahship perished. If he followed Jesus to the judgment hall it was only because, in spite of disappointment, his old affection still endured. All of which means that Peter had lost faith and hope. Had Peter retained his faith in the Lord he might have weathered through the fierce temptation that overtook him there. But when there is no hope and no faith, there is nothing but failure before us. Peter was enfeebled by his own despair. What was the use of risking his life for a Christ who had come to the end of His career? Had Peter kept his faith, he might also have kept his constancy and courage. But believing that the end had come, he swore that he did not know the man! Faithlessness and failure always go hand in hand. No man will dare and suffer for a cause which he believes is a doomed and discredited cause. No man will fight for a Christianity which he regards as 'played out.' A man's enthusiasm for a cause is always in exact proportion to his faith in it. For our revival and prosperity it is an unwavering faith in Christ that we need.

Peter had failed to keep faith with his Master, but his story does not end in failure. Restored to his place in the little band of pioneers for Christ, his straightforward fearlessness is an inspiration to many who would otherwise be found among the cowards when God is calling for men.

He will redeem his nature, he is great
In inward purpose past thy power to scan,
And he will bear his meed of evil fate,
And lift him from his fall a nobler man,
Hating his error as a great man can.[1]

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 186.

[1] Augusta Webster.

He Held His Peace

Mark xiv. 61.—'But he held his peace, and answered nothing.'

THE last hours of the life of our Lord upon earth were passed amid displays of tumultuous energy. Agitation was the note of all His enemies. The Jewish leaders and Pilate were in a condition of uneasy strain. The crowd was seething with excitement, and even the soldiery caught something of the infection and broke the bounds of silent discipline to add by their buffoonery to the general restlessness. In the night-time, in a room where the flickering light set in relief the strong, dark faces of the conspirators, there was the constant sound of quick and anxious speech—of witnesses offering evidence, of counsellors making suggestion, and of leaders interrogating, criticizing, and then conferring amongst themselves how best, and on what charge, to approach Pilate. In the early morning there was the continual agitation of the various trials and the various attempts to escape the responsibility of trial, while all the time the confused noise of the crowd outside made itself heard. It was a day and night of much speaking.

But, through the varying scenes, one Figure stood in all but unbroken silence; and He the one who had most right, and, we should say, most need, to speak. Every now and then He was questioned, but when He answered His words were of the shortest. For the most part He answered them nothing. Amongst all that eager, gesticulating company the one still Figure was the Man upon His defence.

Now that is noteworthy. Not merely because He had His case to put to escape from death, but because it was almost His last chance to preach His gospel. It was not Christ's way to be silent when there was a company gathered together to whom He could proclaim His glad tidings; and in these special circumstances one might have thought that He could put a sudden passion into His pleading, which, even at the eleventh hour, would have made His countrymen hearken. But at this supreme moment, when there seemed most need for His most arresting speech, He scarce would speak at all. Caiaphas and Pilate were one in their amazement at Him. He said just enough to confirm the Jews in their determination to slay Him. For the rest, His only utterance came from His grave, unfaltering eyes.

1. Why was Jesus silent?

(1) *Was His heart broken?* Those who say this forget that He was not wholly silent. He answered some questions before His varied judges with spirit and fire. Indeed, He was never more conscious of power and of His own strength than at this moment. 'Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.' That is not the speech of a broken heart, but of one that is perfectly sure of itself and its own grounds of confidence.

(2) *Was He afraid to commit Himself?* As little afraid as ever. 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am.' That is as plain a statement and answer as any man could either give or expect. No man, then or now, has had cause to misunderstand Christ's view of Himself and His own vocation. He came to tell the world who and what He was. He told it.

(3) *Was He surprised at the turn of events?* Unless the whole record of His life is sheer invention, He not only foresaw the end but walked towards it. Death did not *overtake* Him in any sense: He met it. He spoke to His disciples in repeated warnings, foretelling His end, lest they might be too astounded when the great blow fell. 'The Son of man must die.' He knew that, and openly faced it.

(4) *Was He afraid that God had forsaken Him?* Listen to this quiet word which reveals, more than anything, His perfect trust in God: 'Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.' That is assurance of a supreme order. We may discredit His claim if we like. But at least it is assurance; clear confidence in the Father He loved and served.

2. Jesus was silent because of the character and attitude of the men who questioned Him.

(1) It is no wonder that Jesus held His peace before the Jewish ecclesiastics. They were, indeed, so far quite recognizable men. They stood for the old order, heartily fearing an innovator. Much that Jesus did seemed to them the beginning of the collapse of a carefully reared system of righteousness in act. Much that He said seemed to them rank blasphemy. At any rate, they stood for the old order against the new, and were bitterly in earnest in their championship.

But mingled with that which is comprehensible, and at times commendable, there were darker motives. The retention of the older system also meant the retention of their place and power. They pretended to kill Jesus for the sake of religion; in reality they killed Him for the sake of themselves. Moreover, three years before they had heard the gospel of the Kingdom; and they knew it true. For it consisted in a continual emphasis upon the inwardness of religion and upon the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. They knew it true, just as we know it true, because there was then, as there is now, such a power as the Holy Ghost. But their religion, while earnest, was morally decayed, and they rejected their own inner light. And when men know God's truth, and make religion the mask for its destruction, God has nothing more to say. They may speak; but when they cease, a great silence falls.

¶ They tell us that fishes which live in the water of caverns lose their eyesight; and men that are always living in the dark holes of their own selfish, absorbed natures also lose their spiritual sight; and the fairest, loftiest, truest, and most radiant visions (which are realities)

pass before their eyes, and they see them not. When you put on regard for yourselves, as they used to do blinkers upon horses, you have no longer the power of wide, comprehensive vision, but only see straight forward upon the narrow line which you fancy is marked out by your own interests. If ever there comes into the selfish man's mind a truth, or an aspect of Christ's mission, which may seem to cut against some of his practices or interests, how blind he is to it! When Lord Nelson was at Copenhagen, and they hoisted the signal of recall, he put his telescope to his blind eye and said, 'I do not see it!' And that is exactly what this self-absorbed regard to one's own interests does with hundreds of men who do not in the least degree know it. It blinds them to the plain will of the commander-in-chief flying there at the masthead.

(2) Jesus was silent when falsely accused at the tribunal of the Jewish leaders, and He was silent also when He stood the second time before Pilate. On that tragic morning when Jesus was brought to Pilate's prætorium, the governor had been busy trying the string of cases waiting his judgment. Jesus was just one amongst the rest, and it is evident that Pilate meant to deal with Him according to the principles of Roman justice as he understood and administered them. He demanded the charge. At first he refused to let the Jews have what they asked for—a blind verdict of guilty. He went to the trouble of taking Jesus aside and privately interviewing Him, and then he went forth to the Jews and acquitted Him.

The alarming outburst of passion with which this sound judgment was received made Pilate afraid to abide by it, and as a possible way out of the difficulty of deciding between the voice of his conscience and the clamour of the crowd he sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who, failing to get any amusement out of the captive, sent Him back to Pilate. And now a very significant thing happened. Jesus had been quite ready, in the former interview with Pilate, to answer such questions as helped His judge to come to a just decision. But on the second occasion Pilate, having caught the words 'He made himself the Son of God,' took Jesus aside once more and asked Him, 'Whence art thou?' and Jesus would not answer him. Unwittingly Pilate was asking for an aspect of the case which would have tested him not merely as a just or unjust governor, but as a devout or irreligious man. By His silence Jesus kept the case that Pilate had to deal with well within the range of Pilate's power to do right. All that was required of Pilate that morning was that he should be as just as he knew how to be, that he should have the courage to do the thing he knew to be right. We may be inclined to pity Pilate, who knew, in a sense, nothing of the real situation, and was incapable of understanding it. But in Christ's tacit refusal to enlighten this man, to raise any other issue than that of simple justice, or to cloud with one word of bewildering enlightenment the clear view of duty that Pilate possessed, we can see that the Roman governor was submitted to no unfair or impossible test. Pilate failed not because he was lacking in theological insight, but because he lacked the courage to do his duty. Surely Jesus saw the struggle in the mind of this man. Surely the heart of Christ compassionated this soul, tempted, and at last yielding to the temptation, to put his career before his conscience. This silence of Jesus testifies for all time to the perfect justice and mercy of God, who never leaves us at any moment in our moral life either groping in utter darkness or blinded with too much light.[1]

¶ It has been suggested that Dante was thinking of Pilate when he wrote:

When some among them I had recognized,
I looked, and I beheld the shade of him
Who made through cowardice the great refusal.

We find the other actors in that great tragedy in various parts of Hell. But Pilate we find nowhere, and it would certainly be strange if so prominent an agent in the Crucifixion were allotted no place in the *Inferno*. The man who washed his hands of all moral responsibility at the very moment when he was making 'the great refusal' to deliver Christ from His enemies, certainly deserves a place in this Vestibule of cowards and trimmers.[2]

(3) To Pilate Jesus was a troublesome case, of which he would be glad to be rid; to Herod He was welcome as an object of curiosity, to fill up a dull hour. Court-life is often dull, especially when it is the life of a second-rate, dependent little potentate, like Herod. The Jewish prince was as anxious to see this remark-

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Silences of Jesus*, 68.
[2] J. S. Carroll, *Exiles of Eternity*, 58.

able working man from Galilee as the Roman governor was glad to wash his hands of Him. But Herod's love of sensation, mixed with a superstitious craving, was not gratified. Jesus refused to say a word to him, much less to perform a miracle in his presence, because He had no words for a man who wanted a sort of religious performance in private to amuse him.

Nothing will ever come of the attitude which regards Christianity as a sensation or a spectacle. The faith of Christ has no message for those who merely wish to see it work outside their own lives, as one more phase of religious fervour. It only annoys and puzzles such persons. Their idea is to watch Christianity display its powers, without committing themselves. They are willing to listen to it, to hear what it has to say or what can be said for it, with a patronizing air of detached interest. But they disqualify themselves by this very attitude. The meaning of it eludes them. When Jesus met Herod He met this temper of superficial curiosity, and He had nothing to say to it. He never has. Christianity as the religion which is religion holds together three ideas, the idea of power, the idea of righteousness, and the idea of love. Herod had no interest in any of them, except perhaps in the idea of power, and for him power in religion meant, not the power which subdues the conscience in awe and reverence, but the tricks of a religious conjurer. There was nothing for him in Jesus, no sense of moral need to be met. He expected from Jesus what Horace Walpole expected from John Wesley when he went patronizingly to what he called 'Wesley's opera.' And he was equally disappointed, equally blind to the religious force before him.[1]

¶ When Jesus was taken before Herod, the king hoped, it is said, to have seen some great thing done by Him, 'and he questioned him in many words, and he answered him nothing.' The attitude of our day is not that of an utter rejection of Christianity. Like Herod we appreciate and examine into it, questioning it *in many words* as to what it can do for the world, just as we put the same question to the schemes of science and philosophy. But to an age which, like Herod, is deficient in real faith in its Author, Christianity often answers—nothing.[2]

[1] James Moffatt.
[2] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope.*

Peter's Recovery

Mark xiv. 72.—'And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.'

THERE were two things that brought St Peter back to himself and made him realize his guilt. One was the external sign, which seems to have impressed itself not only on his conscience, but on the memory of all who preserved any recollections of the scene: 'immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew.' Here was the mental signal which brought Peter back to his own vows and promises, and to the Master's warnings of love. But St Luke preserves a second detail which the gratitude of the Church has enshrined in her memory with special tenderness—that 'the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.'[1]

1. Jesus speaks by Providence putting a special voice into common things, if perhaps through ear or eye He may stir the slumbering memory. Our Lord wanted to waken Peter's memory, and He did it by the crowing of the cock. In the dark hour when he was tricked and trapped Peter had forgotten everything. He had forgotten his loyalty and love, and his infinite indebtedness to Jesus. One might have thought that nothing but a thunder-clap would arrest that panic-stricken heart; but Jesus is wiser than our thought. There is nothing but ordinary cock-crow, familiar to Peter since he was a boy. But our Lord, who knows our nature perfectly, knows that memory is a light sleeper, starting awake at the very slightest knock. A bar of music or some familiar fragrance, and the past is all back with us again. A scrap of writing or a little shoe and we are wandering through vanished years. Often when we have sinned and fallen, and are in peril of the hardened heart, it is in such ways that memory awakes.[2] Many besides Peter must have heard the shrilling call of the cock-crow that night, but for him there was something in that note which was inaudible to any other. He heard it with the hearing of his soul, and it was a swift reminder to him of his cowardice and boasting, and of the warning of His Lord.

[1] J. M. E. Ross.
[2] G. H. Morrison, *The Ever Open Door*, 25.

2. But neither falls, nor providences, nor voices of remembered warning were in themselves sufficient. Luke tells us, 'Immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.' And we cannot doubt that it was that look which searched Peter, and broke him down as it has done many another.

¶ 'In the later stage of temptation,' says Dr George Steven, 'the only possible hope of escape from actual sinning must come to us from without—a sudden movement that calls off the attention or something that startles us in the very approach to the act. The modern classic illustration of this is in Browning's *Pippa Passes*; the Scriptural, in the silent look of Jesus on faithless Peter.'[1]

That look was the crisis in the Apostle's spiritual history. It set the springs of memory working as they never worked before. The love and the tenderness, the words and the admonition of the recent months, arose from a past in which they had lain as if dead. They revealed, as nothing but love can reveal, the beauty of the Nature against which the Apostle had sinned, and the baseness of the act by which the Christ had been denied. With tottering step and bursting heart he re-crossed the threshold, and, in the gloom of what must have been to him the dreariest night he ever spent, 'he went out, and wept bitterly.'

I think that look of Christ might seem to say—
'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break My heart upon,
For all God's charge to His high angels may
Guard My foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,
Because I KNOW *this man, let him be clear.*'[2]

¶ In Mr Watts' beautiful picture love is leading life up the steep pathway, over the stones that bruise and pierce, with infinite gentleness but with inexorable purpose. For love can lead where law cannot drive, and love can win where law is powerless to force obedience. For love has resources with which law is not armed; it has the fellowship of burden-bearing and suffering. It asks no one to go where it is not ready to go itself. By its very nature it takes in the experience of one whom it strives to reclaim or correct, and in the anguish of the repentance which it compels it often sweats great drops of blood. Law declares the guilt of the world and imposes its penalty; love carries the consciousness of that guilt home to the deepest nature, compels not only the forsaking of the sin, but the rebirth, with all its pangs, of the soul of the sinner, and walks step by step through the humiliation and bitterness of repentance, restitution, and recovery.[1]

3. Where Simon Peter went to when he hurried forth into the darkness we are not told. Perhaps he retraced his steps to Gethsemane, to weep where his Lord had wept—to bear his agony where the Master had borne His; and if he did so, he must, in his remorse, have contrasted the manner in which the Master went to meet His great temptation with humble prayer, and he with overweening self-confidence. Or perhaps he went back to the Upper Room where the Master had eaten the last Passover with His disciples, and had given him those words of special warning. It must have been to some safe and comparatively solitary place that he would go, and there was none safer in the city than that room, which a loving but unknown disciple had reserved for the use of the Lord and His immediate followers. It may be that again he caught glimpses of the Master, or he may have heard the ringing cry of 'Crucify him! crucify him!' He must have seen the clear noontide obscured by the deep darkness which spread mysteriously over the guilty city; he must have felt the shock of the earthquake, and have been aware of the awful tragedy consummated on Calvary.

It seems incredible that Simon Peter—a man who loved fervently and deeply, a man whose whole life was lived in action—would remain quiet and inactive at such a time. He must have longed with an intense longing to be able to say if but one word of farewell to the dearly loved Master; he must have prayed that, if possible, he might yet hear, if it were but

[1] *The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, 121.
[2] E. B. Browning.

[1] H. W. Mabie, *Life of the Spirit*, 134.

one word that should give him the hope of forgiveness.

Never was there any Sabbath more sadly spent than that Sabbath when Jesus lay in the tomb; and none grieved that day with a more bitter grief than Simon Peter; for added to the sorrow was the sharp sting of self-reproach.

¶ Most of our days are like the plain cornstalks, but life is sprinkled with days that are conspicuous, scarlet, unforgettable. Yes, and there are days that, like the poppy, look like splashes of blood on the cornfield—days with a black cross in the very heart of them.[1]

God draws a cloud over each gleaming morn.
Wouldst thou ask, why?
It is because all noblest things are born
In agony.

Only upon some Cross of pain or woe
God's Son may lie.
Each soul redeemed from self and sin must know
Its Calvary.[2]

4. Simon Peter's memory and character could never lose the mark made by such an experience. We trace it in the words he afterwards wrote out of a new vision and a new strength. 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye.' His failure—calamitous though it was—was not that of a weakling. He loved his Lord with a passionate devotion. Like Cranmer, after his recantation, he rises again to confess boldly the fair free faith of Jesus Christ his Lord. Out of evil he wrested good. He had a realization of how pitifully weak our human nature is when brought face to face with temptation. He had a better knowledge of his Lord and of the love which is able to forgive beyond all that we desire or deserve at His hands. It meant for him renewed consecration, a strengthened faith and a glorious hope for the future, a turning-point in his spiritual history.[3]

What we, too, need in our faithlessness and failures is a vision of Christ. We can best interpret that look of His as, with Peter, we take it to ourselves, and see the pain in the eyes of the Redeemer—the pain of a friend's failure added to the pain of the world's hate. But we can also see in those eyes love softening judgment, and mercy which holds out hope of a better day.

And can a thing so sweet,
And can such heavenly condescension be?
Ah, wherefore tarry thus our lingering feet?
It can be none but Thee!

There is the gracious ear
That never yet was deaf to sinner's call!
We will not linger, and we dare not fear;
But kneel and tell Thee all!

We tell Thee of our sin:
Only half-loathed, only half-wished away;
And those clear eyes of love, that look within,
Rebuke us: seem to say—

'O bought with My own blood!
My own, for whom My precious Life I gave:
Am I so little prized, remembered, loved,
By those I died to save?'

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mountains in the Mist*, 283.
[2] F. P. Cobbe.
[3] G. E. Lenski.

The Two Wills

Mark xv. 3-13.—'And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. . . . But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him.'

Never was tragedy so awful or so swift as that which St Mark recounts in the chapter from which these verses are taken. And this is because the two elements of all tragedy, the will of God and the will of Man, are there combined and running to the same end. In most other tragedies which have happened upon this woeful world of ours these two are separate and even hostile. Sometimes, as chiefly in ancient tragedy, it is the inscrutable, irresistible will of God which carries all before it, baffling the reason and breaking the hearts of the purest and bravest of men. Fate and man helpless before it form the interest and the pathos. In much of modern tragedy, again, what fascinates us is human responsibility; the demoniac power of the individual will—how *it* may defeat the plans

and defy the love of God Himself. But in that tragedy which divides the ancient from the modern world the love of God and the evil will of man conspire to the same end.

1. *The Will of God in the Sufferings and Death of Christ.*—Nothing is clearer from the Gospels than this: that it was Christ's own will to die. He had long set His face steadfastly to Jerusalem. While others still deemed it impossible, His soul lay already under the shadow of the Cross.

Some men make up their mind to die when they feel the stress of circumstance bearing in that direction. And, indeed, he is invested with a certain sacredness, however mean in soul he may be, whom we see delivered to death by events over which he has no control. But Jesus felt no outward circumstance compelling Him to death. Circumstance, in truth, was much the other way. Humanly speaking His Cross was not inevitable. There were moments when He might have escaped. But He stirred up the Pharisees, disappointed the people who would have made Him King, bade Judas do his business, and, last of all, was silent before Pilate.

It is no less clear that He did this in order to fulfil a mission laid upon Him by His Father. He regarded opportunities to escape as temptations. The lips of flesh would be excused from touching that burning cup and prayed: 'Father if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.' But He added, 'Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' Because it was His Father's will He set His face to the Cross.

¶ There are various types of death. There is the death of the good, the death when the soul surrenders itself into the hands of God. There is another kind of death. It is the death of Gordon of Khartum, the death of the hero. There is a third. Literature has never forgotten Socrates in the Agora of Athens. It is a beautiful scene. The Grecian sage has been sentenced to death on a false charge. He is to be his own executioner, and the great old man talks calmly to his disciples, settles his earthly affairs, says good-bye to one after another, then takes the cup of poison and drinks it, and all is over. Or yet, once more, yonder in a Chinese town a Chinese Christian sinks beneath the stones of the mob. 'Are you sorry?' asks the missionary. 'Sorry! Oh no,' he says. 'How glad! Only sorry that I have done so little for Jesus.' These are the types of death as the world gives them. They are the deaths of the good, the heroic, the sage, the martyr. Christ's was not like any of these. Or rather it takes up and comprehends all these. There is one thing common to them all. They had to be. But Christ's was deliberately accepted. Death did not choose Him. He chose death. He met it at the trysting-place where He and not death determined, and He went to the Cross, though legions of angels were waiting to bear Him away from it.[1]

Christ also declared why He must suffer. He had come to bear witness to the truth among a people who, as He pointed out, had with tragic consistency slain their prophets. Yet the burden of truth He brought from Heaven was not the only burden He carried. He found another awaiting Him on earth in the sins of men; and this, though sinless Himself, He stooped to bear in all its weight. He felt the shame and the guilt of sin as never the best or the worst of men had felt it. He had confessed it for others; He had borne it in prayer to God. He had proclaimed its forgiveness. And finally He connected His death with that forgiveness. 'I give my life,' He said, 'a ransom for many.' 'This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins.'

All this was settled and clear before morning broke upon that Friday. That is why He was so silent before the Jewish Council and with Pilate. Why should He argue? The great argument of His life was over; the argument with God in the night-time, in the Garden; and His heart was set past doubt or fear upon the Cross. He would not say anything for His own sake to turn the undecided Pilate. For Pilate was but the instrument of the Father's will—'Thou wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above'—and Jesus knew His Father's will to be that He should die.

It was the Feast of the Jewish Passover. There was a custom at the time to set free one prisoner, to pardon one criminal. Israel had been prisoners in the land of Egypt, and on the first Passover night God had both spared and released them. Whatever the Romans thought of the custom, it is obvious that the Jews themselves took it as a memorial of their nation's deliverance, a symbol of God's sparing and

[1] R. Waddell.

redeeming mercy. But at this Passover the custom was to be repeated with an exhibition of that mercy to which their excited souls were blind. For among the prisoners who might be released was Jesus Christ Himself, standing side by side with a very notorious criminal; and the people were given the power to choose between them, yet not without Christ's own consent. We are not told what feelings of pity moved our Lord for this man whom they brought up from the dungeon and placed in the sunshine by His side, while the balance trembled between them. But we know that such compassion must have been but a single drop of the infinite love which filled His heart for all sinners, and for their sakes kept Him silent when a word might have saved Him. It was not for Barabbas only He was silent. On that day Christ Jesus laid down His life for men.

This is His own testimony—that in giving Himself to death He was earning for men the forgiveness of their sins, freedom to come to God, power to break from evil; and, in all that, the assurance of a new life which can never be taken from them.

To this testimony the experience of men who have believed it has corresponded. With or without theories of atonement they have found that it has wakened their penitence, answered their conscience, brought them to God, assured them of His love, and filled them with fresh moral power. For, first, they have been startled by Christ's agony into feeling what sin is, what it costs, what it means in estranging God from man, and the suffering it therefore lays on the hearts of both. At the foot of Christ's Cross they have known a conscience of sin, a horror of it, and a penitence for their own share in it deeper than anything else has started in human experience. And as thus their whole spiritual nature has been roused, and they have awakened to the truth that it would not have been morally well for them to have been forgiven by mere clemency and without feeling what sin costs, they have come to understand that in His sufferings Christ was their Substitute. The question of the justice of such a substitution has not disturbed their faith; for if they have thought about it, they have remembered that, apart from Christ, it happens again and again in human experience that the innocent suffer, and gladly suffer, for the guilty, with moral results of the most beneficial kind to the latter. In Christ they see God's love proving itself not less, in sympathy and identification with the worst, than human love has again and again attempted to be.

¶ A very beautiful example is provided by George Eliot in the character of Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*. In her yearning over poor Hetty we are told she felt the Divine presence more and more, nay, as if she herself were part of it and it was the Divine pity that was beating in her heart and so willing the rescue of this helpless one. 'See, Lord, I bear her on my arms and carry her before Thee. I believe in Thy infinite love. What is *my* love or *my* pleading? It is quenched in Thine.' [1]

They have not, of course, imagined that Christ's was a physical substitution; for in their most awakened moments they have not conceived the forgiveness which they sought to consist essentially in the removal of the physical consequences of their sins. The forgiveness they desired may have held that element in it as an incident; but it essentially consisted in the restoration of God's love and trust, to their unworthy souls. Now Christ bore all that had made this restoration impossible. He entered, as they could not have done, and therefore *for* them, into the meaning of sin and its effects. He felt the bitterness of their estrangement from God, the loss of the sense of being His sons, which sin had cost men: in a word, the real punishment of sin. And by becoming one with Him, in all this, His experience in life and death, they knew, in fulfilment of His word, that the Father had forgiven them, and for Christ's sake trusted them once more as His children.

2. *The Will and Sin of Man.*—If by their sin men made the death of Christ necessary, it is not strange, in order to bring this home to our hearts, that human reponsibility for that death should continue to the very end—the last nail which pierced Him, the last jest which the crowd spattered upon His sufferings. And so the shout, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' came that day not with thunder from heaven, but from the throats of a multitude of men.

It is significant that our Lord was slain by no mere drift of circumstance, but by the deliberate and confessed choice of men's wills, and that He was doomed to the Cross not by the supreme Roman authority, but by the voice of the people.

[1] A. D. Belden.

Think of what the people and their leaders had done. They had tried to get rid of the charge of blasphemy they had brought against our Lord, and now accused Him of treason against Cæsar. Blind hearts! Every one of them had been nearer making Him King than He had been Himself. It was not He but they who had sinned against Cæsar. Yet they made the charge in order to get His blood taken off their hands. It was to be returned to them; as if God would have made it clear that no man who has known Christ may escape a decision regarding Him.

This was what Christ came into the world for. And we, to whom He has been presented all our lives, can, least of all, hope to escape. The claims of Christ on the world are not going to be settled by our authorities—either in philosophy or in theology. His last appeal is not to the wisdoms or the powers of the world, but to the common human heart, with all its prejudice and passion.

Nor let us fail to notice the hour in which the men of Jerusalem were called to give their decision. The crowd which clamoured for the blood of Jesus was much the same as that which, less than a week before, had shouted Hosanna as He entered their city, and had hailed Him as King. To a human eye that would have seemed the cardinal point in the history of their relations with Him. But God chose another hour for the crisis. He chose, not the day of their easy enthusiasm, but that of their power; the one day in the year when they were given the right to deal with Jesus as they willed; the one set of conditions in which it was possible for Jesus to be set up before their eyes with an alternative, and they knew their power to choose. The supreme moment in the history of Christ with themselves was not when He came to them as 'the King in His Beauty,' but when He stood an equal alternative with Barabbas.

It is not our attitude to our Lord in the easy hours of worship which determines our true relation to Him. Our real heart for Him is shown, our true relation to Him is determined, far rather in those other, darker hours when temptation is strong upon us; and we have to choose between Himself and our sin. Our relation to Christ turns neither upon the inclination of our emotions nor upon our intellectual assent, nor upon our adherence to human authority or custom, but essentially upon the giving of our will to Him—upon our choice of Him, to whom experience presents to us so many alternatives.[1]

Now at last I end the strife,
To my God I give my life,
Wholly, with a steadfast mind.
Sin, I will not parley more;
World, I turn from thee, 'tis o'er:
Not a look I'll cast behind.

Has my heart been wavering long?
Have I dallied oft with wrong?
Now at last I firmly say:
All my will to this I give,
Only to my God to live,
And to serve Him night and day.

Pilate

Mark xv. 15.—'And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.'

THE sin of Pontius Pilate was the sin of acquiescence. It was not that he did wrong; it was that he did nothing. The world as we have it is simply the immense and unravelled result of the actions and *in*actions of an infinite number of people who have, on the whole, been not so much bad people as simply people who above everything wished to be as free of trouble as possible.

¶ 'He dodges trouble,' House said about Wilson, long before the War. And because, in the world's evil day, a man like that held his position, millions of people in how many lands use that unhappy soul as the last test of their Christianity. 'Forgive us our trespasses,' they say, 'as we forgive them who have trespassed against us.' And then they pause, and wonder, is that true? Do I forgive the man, but for whose dodging of trouble my boy would have been alive to-day? And they are not quite sure.[2]

1. Christ standing before Pilate! *That* was a situation, a contrast which could not but be perceived as having about it something typical and dramatic and enduring. We have only to see them face to face to feel in the depths of our

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, 105.
[2] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 136.

soul what God meant man to be. Of course, like Pilate himself we may juggle with our own inveterate moral instinct. We may whip up reasons upon reasons for refusing to see life so simply as that. But all the time we know we are putting pressure upon ourselves, like an advocate with a desperate brief. There they stand—a kind of snapshot taken by God Himself—and no man can claim to be a man who, looking at the one and the other, does not see his way.

We have the habit of saying, 'Christ before Pilate.' What really we ought to say is, 'Pilate before Christ.' We feel that Christ can stand there for ever: it is Pilate who must get away. 'When a reviewer offers an article upon "Tennyson as a Fifth-rate Poet," we do not expect much light upon Tennyson, but we shall know all about the writer of the article. We have seen the history of criticism upon Shakespeare, Milton, and the like, with all its contradictions and fluctuations. Now, all through this history Shakespeare and Milton have remained exactly the same!'[1]

It is the nearness of Christ to him which enables us to see Pilate. It was the nearness of Christ to him that almost succeeded in enabling Pilate to see himself. When, in the grey afternoon, we begin not to be able to see the letters on the printed page, we draw nearer to the window. Whereupon the letters stand out again in the whiter light. It is a great principle. And so we read that God sent His Son into the world that we might see ourselves, and become unhappy, and humble, and be saved. 'I came not to send peace, but a sword,' said Jesus; and who has not seen a sword of light flashing into a curtained room, and pointing intensely at something, like the very finger of God! And who has not had some such an experience in the inner chamber of his soul!

2. Was Pilate serious? Was he really impressed by Jesus? When his wife urged him to be careful, and told him of a dream she had had, had that the effect, even for a little while, of making Pilate more uneasy, or even of making him slightly afraid? Or was the whole thing in his view a merely local and troublesome incident in the varied responsibilities of a State official who has been appointed to the difficult business of holding down a conquered people, and preferably by adroitness, by going round rather than by going through?

[1] J. H. Moulton.

I have been worried, ever since his death,
About my husband.
I warned him many times of that young Jew—
'Don't let those ignorant natives kill him,' I
begged,
'You will be bitterly blamed for it,
Sometime, somewhere!'
He was too fair, too logical, my husband.
'But think,' he said, 'what I am bound to do,
In these outlandish districts!
Rome rules by tact, by suppleness, by smoothness.
It seems they want to kill him—we must let
them.
Bloodthirsty rabble!'
He washed his hands in water before them, later.
They were so crude, one spoke to them in
pictures.[1]

We should, of course, like to believe that no one ever stood near to Christ without being the better for it. And yet we must not presume upon that. If it should turn out to be so—that no one ever stood near to Christ without becoming different and better—it will be one of the added glories of heaven. But we must not be sure, or speak as though we knew for certain. We do know that, when he first encountered Jesus, Pilate was simply one of those natural men who are called upon to deal with an enormous number of matters which look small to them, because they do not feel them. We may say, too, that he was one who had settled down to a rather cynical and unenthusiastic view of life.

There is a kind of admiration of Jesus in his behaviour towards Him. And yet it is an admiration of the man, accompanied by something like contempt for all that He stood for. 'I am sent to bear witness to the truth,' said Jesus. 'What is truth?' rejoined the other, with the weariness of a cosmopolitan, with a kind of regret that a simple man should be so enamoured of anything as to put his life in jeopardy for the sake of it.

¶ Jesting Pilate had not the smallest chance to ascertain what was Truth. He could not have known it, had a god shown it to him. Thick serene opacity, thicker than amaurosis,

[1] Josephine D. Bacon, *Pilate's Wife*.

veiled those smiling eyes of his to Truth; the inner *retina* of them was gone paralytic, dead. He looked at Truth; and discerned her not, there where she stood.[1]

We can answer none of these questions. It is no part of our business to answer them. The point for us is that Jesus and Pilate represent two voices which accompany us all through our life, from the cradle to the grave. It may even be that they are always facing each other on the stage of our inmost soul. There is the way of a final laughter at man: and there is the way of faith. There is the way of shrugging our shoulders as though saying, 'What does it matter?' and then washing our hands. And there is the way through life which, led by Christ, they take who hold that for man there is but one great misfortune, and that is, to receive an idea which exercises no influence upon his active life; to see something, to hear something, something which calls to us, and, having seen it or heard it, having acknowledged it, to trample it under our feet in some strong and contradicting deed.[2]

His Own Clothes

Mark xv. 20.—'And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.'

We wonder, sometimes, why the Evangelists did not tell us some of the things about Jesus we would have given much to know: about His personal appearance, the days of His childhood, and even more about the closing scenes of His earthly life. How was it that this seemingly unimportant fact had so impressed itself upon the imagination of St Matthew and St Mark, that when the soldiers had finished their brutal sport they took off the purple from Him, and gave Him back His own garment? They never forgot how the enemies of Jesus dressed Him up to mock Him; but they put His own clothes on Him when He went forth to die for the redemption of mankind.

The touch is not such an insignificant one in the great picture as we have perhaps been in the habit of thinking. 'He was thus mocked, not in His own clothes, but in another's,' says Matthew Henry, 'to signify that He suffered not for His own sin.' But more significant, surely, is the fact that, when He went forth to His last crowning act of sacrifice and redemption, He went clad in the purple pomp of no alien splendour, but in something that fitted and befitted Him—those clothes which the woman in the crowd had found so healing, that white robe at whose folds the children had clutched, those garments which He had laid aside to stoop and wash the feet of Judas and His friends.

¶ Stratford Hospital has a portrait of Queen Mary, generously given by Mr Frank O. Salisbury, the painter. It depicts Her Majesty without the formality of state dress—a study made to represent her as she appeared in France during the war.

Mr Salisbury was about to go to New York for an exhibition of his work; and it was requested that the portrait of Queen Mary should be included as a special feature. He sent a message to America to the following effect: 'I cannot bring a portrait of Her Majesty in full court regalia, but I have one in ordinary dress.' The reply was to the point: 'This is precisely what we want—the Queen as she is.'[1]

1. When Jesus stood there on His trial before Pilate and the eyes of the world, Matthew through moist eyes got an impression that they had dressed Him up in scarlet; Peter told Mark long afterwards that his impression was that it was purple; while John mentions no colour, saying only that it was 'gorgeous apparel.' In any case, they all felt that it was something unreal and out of place. It was a mockery of a profound fact, a travesty of a great truth. And when that Figure is on trial to-day it is the garments some of us have made Him wear which hide His identity from the eyes of men. When we put His own clothes on Him He still goes forth to redeem the world.

This is the perpetual demand of the world, 'Sir, we would see Jesus,' not something dressed up to conform to your ideas of kingship—for these as likely as not will but misrepresent Him and mock His claims—but in His own clothes. Such a stalwart of evangelicalism as Erskine of Linlathen, for example, writing to a correspondent, says: 'The more I think of our conversations about the different places which belong to the subjective and the objective in religion, the more I am persuaded that it is impossible that

[1] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, bk. i. ch. ii.
[2] J. A. Hutton, *There They Crucified Him*, 115.

[1] Kathleen Woodward, *The Life Story of the Queen of England.*

we can mean different things. I think only that you insist too much on conventional language, which I feel called on to avoid, because I find that it is so often used to stand in the place of the thing itself.' And from a very different quarter, Mr H. G. Wells echoes the same kind of thought. 'Every religious body, every religious teacher, has appreciated the need there is of reminders and renewals. Faith needs restatement and revival as the body needs food.' Some would dress that Figure in scarlet; others would parade Him in purple or other gorgeous apparel; and immediately we not only disagree, but, worse still, we only succeed in disguising Him and making Him appear unworthy of the reverence and worship of men. If only we would put on Him His own clothes and not our own highly coloured garments! Each succeeding age does what those Roman soldiers did—it strips off the trappings which others had put about the figure of Christ, and instead of diminishing aught of His kingliness, the greatness of that Figure does but the more stand out in Divine simplicity, compelling anew the homage of men.

¶ This great fact of the rediscovery of Jesus Christ by each succeeding age has been stated in memorable form by Thomas Carlyle in his chapter on 'Church-Clothes' in *Sartor Resartus*. 'In our era of the World those same Church-Clothes have gone sorrowfully out-at-elbows; nay, far worse, many of them have become mere hollow Shapes or Masks, under which no living Figure or Spirit any longer dwells.' But, he goes on, 'Religion in unnoticed nooks is weaving for herself new Vestures, wherewith to reappear, and bless us, or our sons or grandsons.'

2. In addition to that intellectual aspect of the words of the Evangelist there is a moral truth suggested by them which is worthy of our careful consideration. In their rough and brutal way those who dressed up our Lord had sought to give expression to a true idea. Jesus was a prophet; He was a priest; He was a king. But He had not shown Himself in the manner in which they had expected. The Jewish rulers had looked for a great *prophet* in Him, but they had looked for the wrong kind of manifestation, and they were doomed to disappointment. And their disappointment showed itself in the way in which they chose to torture Him. They blindfolded Him, and then struck Him, and said, with unspeakable coarseness: 'Prophesy: who is it that struck thee?' The soldiers, on the other hand, had heard all the talk about His being a *king*. But how vastly this humble Galilean disappointed the Roman idea of a king. And so the soldiers took it out of Him by mocking Him as a king. And, once again, there were those who had thought of Him as a *priest* and *saviour* of their nation. But their crude hopes had been doomed to disappointment at the hands of one so spiritual. And so that portion of the crowd abused Him on the cross as a saviour. 'If thou be the Christ, save thyself and come down from the cross.'

Of course we see to-day how false were the conceptions of prophet, of kingship, and of saviourhood that Jesus had disappointed in those who so misunderstood and so abused Him. We see to-day how perfect a prophet He was, how great a king, how wise and mighty a saviour. But do we not all make the same kind of moral mistake? Here, for example, is a man who was prepared to bow the knee to Jesus of Nazareth. But he found that that meant that there were certain things which he could not make altogether plain to his intellect. He found that belief in Jesus Christ was going to make certain demands upon faith as well as reason. And immediately, in our Lord's word, he was 'offended,' and not only withdrew the allegiance which he ought to have given, but mocked that religion which appealed to something more than his intellect. Or here is another who was prepared to make Jesus king. But he soon found that the kingship of Christ meant the complete destruction of certain things in his life which were not compatible with loyalty to Christ. And the demand made upon him was too much; and now the very thought of the kingship of Christ makes him wince, and is an idea that he hates and even caricatures. Or here again is a passionate but dogmatic social reformer who thought he saw in Jesus of Nazareth the leader who would countenance all his cherished views. But that man from Nazareth demands something more than our genial patronage; and now he wags his head and rails, and says in effect, 'If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross and save thyself and us.'

Or it may be just that it was ourself, who felt Him near once, knew in one ineffable moment the directness of His call to us, admitted His

right to the lordship of our lives, but—held back.

> And sometimes horror chills our blood
> To be so near such mystic things,
> And we wrap round us for defence
> Our purple manners, moods of sense—
> As angels from the face of God
> Stand hidden in their wings.

We refuse to see Him as He is, and then try to make ourselves believe that He has eluded us.

If that be our plight, there is only one way back to glad certainty and confident centrality of faith. It cannot be better expressed than it was in the inscription which the President of the United States of America wrote for placing in the millions of Bibles presented to the American soldiers and sailors going forth to bear their part in the great fight for freedom. 'The Bible is the word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves—read, not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it. You will find it full of real men and women, but also of things you have wondered about and been troubled about all your life, as men have been always; and the more you read the more it will become plain to you what things are worth while and what are not: what things make men happy—loyalty, right dealings, speaking the truth, readiness to give everything for what they think their duty, and, most of all, the wish that they may have the real approval of the Christ, who gave everything for them; and the things that are guaranteed to make men unhappy—selfishness, cowardice, greed, and everything that is low and mean.' In other words, do not be satisfied to see Jesus in the garments which other men have put upon Him; do not even leave Him in the robes which your own fancy had woven of how He would appear or how His religion should seem to you; but see Him with His own clothes on Him, and see if this be not for you also Saviour and Redeemer.

Simon of Cyrene

Mark xv. 21.—'And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.'

A BRIEF verse from each of the Synoptists is all we have regarding Simon. Yet each is not just the echo of the others. Each puts the incident in his own way; and so we find, as might be expected, a touch supplied by one which is not given by the others. Thus we are helped to a complete picture in our own minds. We see the melancholy procession on its way from the Prætorium to Calvary. Jesus is in its midst. Accompanying Him are the two thieves, bound for the same tragic end. The soldiers are there in strong force, with their centurion at their head, charged with the safeguarding of the prisoners and the carrying out of the sentence of crucifixion. And the mixed multitude are there—priests, rulers, people of all classes and conditions, enlivening the way with their brutal pleasantries. Onward the procession moves through street after street, bringing people forth from their houses to inquire what it all means, and to add to Jesus' reviling foes or to His few silent friends, according as the sight happens to touch them. At length it reaches the gate of the city, and makes for the hill in the open country beyond the walls, where ceremonial defilement from malefactors dying was supposed no longer to be feared.

The malefactor who was to be crucified had to carry the rough baulk of timber, the transverse beam of his own cross, from the hall of judgment to the place of execution. Jesus had begun to carry the cross according to this custom, but He now gave way beneath its weight. The terrible physical suffering which He had endured had worn all His strength away, so that now He sinks to the ground exhausted. The soldiers are in a dilemma. It is evident that Jesus must get assistance; He can go on no longer. The crowd presses round Him, gazing at Him with, on the whole, little if any more pity than a crowd bestows on a horse that has fallen on the street. What is to be done? The soldiers will certainly not lower themselves by helping a criminal to carry his cross. The Jews will do nothing to assist; they would flout the idea of touching that accursed piece of wood, the symbol of the Roman despotism which they hate. The soldiers look around for someone who will serve their purpose, but they see no one. The Jews about them have friends in Jerusalem: it would be dangerous to rouse a Jewish mob by forcing anyone there to undertake the hateful task. Too much blood has been shed of late in these very streets. They are almost at their wits' end; but just at this moment they catch sight of Simon.

He is on pilgrimage to the Holy City from his home in North Africa, and a crowd of high and sacred feelings are filling him. He is coming up to observe the most honoured of Jewish feasts. And here is the Divine Paschal Lamb coming forth to meet him, on His way to be slain on Calvary. Could it be supposed that one looking as he was for the consolation of Israel would see at once in that most melancholy sight the fulfilment of his grandest hopes? Jesus bending and ready to fall under His heavy cross, and going to die upon it—could this be the consolation and the glory of Israel? Could He be the long-looked-for Messiah? Or was it true that the Paschal Lamb, associated with the great deliverance from Egypt's bondage, slain, roasted, eaten, was after all but the type of the true Messiah, and that Simon, coming to observe the type, was to find in that cross-bearing Jesus on His way to Calvary the veritable antitype? It was even so, as Simon, we have reason to believe, soon came to know.

1. *The Greatness of Simon's Opportunity.*—That Simon should have been coming into the city as Jesus was coming out might be called a strange coincidence. It was more. It was the predestination of God. That was the predestined moment when Simon's opportunity came to him. It was the moment when he was compelled to be alone with Christ. It was a golden opportunity. How Simon used it we can do more than guess. He might have struggled, like a galled ox, burning with deep resentment at the wrong done to him. He might have carried off his contumely with a bravado which would have appealed to the humour of the crowd. But this devout pilgrim had a spirit prepared for another way. He was precisely the man to profit by being alone with Jesus. We dare not say that any unreported words, or soft whisper, passed from Jesus to Simon. But we can be sure that Jesus turned and looked on Simon—a look of human gratitude and of Divine compassion, and of irresistible appeal. He could not resist the Divine look.

¶ In one of the many thoughtful pieces in his volume of poems entitled *Color*, Countee Cullen, who is the son of a coloured Methodist minister at Haarlem, tells the story of Simon the Cyrenian. Simon at first resents the request of Jesus that he should bear His cross, but afterwards he willingly agrees, conquered by the love he sees in the suffering eyes of the prisoner being led to His crucifixion.

> At first I said I will not bear
> His cross upon my back;
> He only seeks to place it there
> Because my skin is black.
>
> But He was dying for a dream,
> And He was very meek;
> And in His eyes there shone a gleam
> Men journey far to seek.
>
> It was Himself my pity bought;
> I did for Christ alone
> What all of Rome could not have wrought
> With bruise of lash or stone.

There is such a predestined moment in every life. The urgent need of many souls, and the peculiar opportunity of God's Holy Spirit, is that they know themselves to be alone with Jesus. In this busy life, when the world is too much with us, when the old silences and privacies seem to be impossible for most, there are many souls who are never alone with Jesus. God makes the opportunity for them. For some it is made by a low, easily-hushed call in their unsullied youth; for others it is reached in the gentle providences of God; for others it is gained by the arresting words of some persuasive counsel. It is a blessedness, which is a joy for ever, for a man to know himself compelled to be alone with Jesus through these simple and easy devices of God. But others, like Simon of Cyrene, do not reach it until some cross is laid upon their shoulders, and they are compelled to walk in the *via dolorosa* with Jesus.

2. *The Greatness of Simon's Reward.*—Christ never allowed any honour paid to Him or any service done to Him to pass unrewarded. When a village girl asked Him to her wedding feast, He turned the water into wine. When a humble home offered Him hospitality on the Sabbath day, He touched its mistress, and expelled her fever. When a Samaritan gave Him a draught from the well, He gave her to drink of the Living Water. When a poor city waif stooped to kiss His feet, He sent her out with a blessing of peace. No cup of cold water given to Christ ever lost its reward. And this pre-eminent service done by Simon enjoyed its great reward.

What was that reward? It was, in the first

place, his own salvation. There is little doubt that he became Christ's disciple. It would have been contrary both to nature and to grace, that any man should come so near Jesus, and should do so much for Him, and not be called into His Kingdom.

¶ Canon Carus tells how the verse in St Luke's Gospel referring to Simon of Cyrene proved a finger of light once to Simeon of Cambridge. 'At an early period of his ministry, and when he was suffering severe opposition, he was in much doubt whether it was his duty to remain in Cambridge. . . . He opened his little Greek Testament, as he thought and intended in the Epistles, and, finding the book upside down, he discovered he was in the Gospels, and his finger on Luke xxiii. 26, "They laid hold on one Simon (Simeon), and on him they laid the cross," etc. "Then," said Mr Simeon, "lay it on me, Lord, and I will bear it for Thy sake to the end of my life; and henceforth I bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow."'[1]

But Simon's reward was greater than the saving of his own soul. It was the answer of his most instant and constant and urgent prayers. Away in Cyrene this pilgrim to the Holy City had left two little sons, and as he looked upon them, exiles from the land of Israel, as he taught them the fear of the God of Jacob, the very passion of his heart was distilled into prayer, that they might grow in the faith and obedience of God. Christ read the heart of His cross-bearer as he walked by His side. He saw the names, Rufus and Alexander, graven on Simon's heart. And the great reward was given to Simon of seeing both his sons known and loved and honoured in the Church of Christ.

¶ In the brave Disruption days in Scotland there were men who bore the cross after Jesus. Not only, and not chiefly, by those in the ranks of the ministry who found fame shining on the path of sacrifice, but by many in obscure homes. By costly sacrifice, by long years of patient self-denial, by the enduring of scorn and the suffering of loss, these men and women followed Christ. They left behind them the house of prayer round which their dead were lying; they stood on the moors in the bitter winter blasts of 1844, and by the seashore, where their psalms were mingled with the hoarse chant of the waves; they refused emolument and advantage for conscience sake; they poured with unstinting hand the gifts of their poverty into the common cause; they turned their faces from friendships it broke their hearts to lose—they bore the Cross of Christ. And mark their reward. Their children stand strong in the faith and devotion of Christ; they are loyal to every cause which promotes the righteousness of the people. And they say that their faith was kindled by their father's sacrifice. He bore a cross for Jesus.[1]

[1] James Moffatt.

The cross which Simon helped to carry was Christ's cross, not his own. Can we do the same to-day? Surely he bears the Cross of Christ who honestly and willingly suffers pain or loss in order to further in the world that for which Christ died. And if He died that the weary and heavy-laden should be raised and cheered, then one would suppose that every stooping form would be touched by us as His form, and every burden lightened as if it were part of the weight which pressed Him down. 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.' Thus He checked the tears of idle emotion—but only that He might draw out a deeper depth of action. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it,' He said, 'unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

We might suppose that in nineteen centuries Christians would have learned this simple lesson by heart, and have made the lifting of human sorrow the first test of Christian love. But what do we find? We find that in that long past which lies behind us the tragedy of the Saviour's cross has been made too much a spectacle, a moving drama, complete and apart, and too little a plan, a process, continued and perfected in us. 'It is finished,' He cried. But the work of the Cross will never be finished until sorrow and sighing have fled wholly away. His own part was finished; He would have done more if they had suffered Him to do it; the wooden beams were unfastened, laid aside, and the very site of the cross is now unknown; but the true Cross, of which that other was but an emblem, still remains, and is loaded, or lightened, for Him and for humanity as we do our part well or ill.

I think of the Cyrenian
  Who crossed the city-gate
When forth the stream was pouring
  That bore Thy cruel fate.

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, 164.

I ponder what within him
The thoughts that woke that day,
As his unchosen burden
He bore that unsought way.

Yet, tempted he as we are;
O Lord, was Thy cross mine?
Am I, like Simon, bearing
A burden that is Thine?

Thou must have looked on Simon;
Turn, Lord, and look on me,
Till I shall see and follow
And bear Thy cross for Thee.

The Cup Christ Refused

Mark xv. 23.—'And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.'

It was a kindly provision of the Jews to give an opiate to the condemned. They found their warrant in the page of the Old Testament. Anæsthetics in these earlier days were, of course, very far from perfect. There was no method of mitigating pain save by some dulling or stupefying drug. And it was such a draught that was offered to the Lord when He reached the place appointed for His death. This was fittingly the ministry of women. There was a guild of ladies who charged themselves with that. They bought the ingredients and mingled them, and had them ready for the unhappy criminal. And no one who witnessed the scene ever forgot how, when the draught was handed to the Lord, He quietly and deliberately refused it. It was the one cup which He refused to drink.

Why would not Jesus drink of this cup? He did not usually disregard any gracious service done to Him. When He sat by the well of Samaria He eagerly sought and gratefully accepted the water from the woman's hand. When hunger pressed Him He went in with simple gratitude to meat. In the Garden of Gethsemane He earnestly entreated the companionship and the solace of men. And when He found Himself fainting under the weight of His cross He willingly allowed it to be placed on the shoulders of Simon of Cyrene. But now, when He is spent with hours of fasting, when He is face to face with the agony of the Cross, He refuses the cup offered to Him by kindly hands. Why? Because He will not have His senses drugged; He will not have His mind clouded. He will not suffer any unspiritual aid to be given to His resolve. He will be fully master of Himself. He will go through the valley of the shadow of death with every faculty in unclouded clearness, with body, soul, and spirit poured out in the act of dying before God. Let us consider this incident in four aspects.

¶ 'Johnson,' says Boswell, 'with that native fortitude which amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. "Give me," said he, "a direct answer." The doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that in his opinion he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; but I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he persevered.'

1. *The Light it casts on the Purpose of Jesus' Death.*—The purpose of Christ's death is a subject of vexing contention for Christian thinkers. Its depths remain unfathomed for many devout souls. Its uses and issues are perplexities for many who love His name. The most unthinking reader, however, can see that it occupied the place of supreme importance to Christ. It was the event towards which He looked, the goal towards which He strained, the hour for whose coming He waited. His very face shines with the foregleams of mingled suffering and triumph when He sets His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem for His dying hour.

If it was the burden of Christ's heart before it was accomplished, it was the chant of the disciples after Calvary was past. No other subject so possesses, inspires, exalts these apostolic men. One of the wonderful things about the Epistles is their scanty reference to Christ's life and words. We are eager to dwell on that life of loveliness and grace. But Paul and Peter and James and John have their hearts more set on the risen Christ, and on His coming again.

Why has the death of Jesus this place of pre-eminence? Surely not because it was the final and dramatic seal to a life of righteousness.

Surely not because we may thereby be touched and emotionalized into a strenuous morality. Surely not because of its pathos and sorrow, that we might love Him for the dangers He has passed with the love pity deigns to bestow. No; the death of Christ was His supreme work—the work He desired with anguish to accomplish; the work for which He took our flesh and veiled His Godhead. In that dying act He bore our guilt and offered Himself our sacrifice. As He stands beside the Cross, He is laying Himself down on the altar of God, and He will do His great deed in the full might of a willing, conscious, unclouded sacrifice.

2. *The Light it casts on the Value of Jesus' Dying Hour.*—Let us conceive that Jesus had yielded to this temptation, that, face to face with the agony of the Cross, He had drained the cup, and so passed under the influence of that rude chloroform into death. Conceive what would have been lost—lost to those men who heard Him pray for His murderers; lost to that centurion whose soldier's heart was taught how to die; lost to the mother who looked up into His face, whose submission He would never have seen, whose need He would never have considered; lost to that malefactor, that man of piercing vision and daring faith, whose face was turned to Him, who passed hand in hand with Him into the Kingdom of Heaven! And think of a wider area of loss. Those seven great words of love would never have been spoken.

The value of Jesus' dying hour is not exhausted when we think of the gracious deeds He did, and the conscious words He spoke as He met the last enemy. His horizon was not bounded by the faces of that Jewish mob who watched the end, or by the walls of that city under whose shadow He died. He saw the faces of the men and women who should die in His faith and for His love. He would fain teach them and us how to die—with eyes uplifted to God, with unclouded heart, with a great word of Scripture on which to stay the soul, and a prayer of blessing for men upon the lips. He would do more than that. He would comfort His people by the knowledge that there was no experience He had not passed through, no travail He had not endured.

O most entire and perfect sacrifice,
Renewed in every pulse
That on the tedious Cross
Told the long hours of death, as, one by one,
The life strings of that tender heart gave way;
Even sinners, taught by Thee,
Look Sorrow in the face,
And bid her freely welcome, unbeguiled
By false kind solaces, and spells of earth!

¶ Dr G. H. Morrison says: 'There was a friend of my boyhood's home who suffered from an excruciating trouble. He was a genuinely Christian man, who had been active in the service of the Kingdom. And when friends stooped down to catch what he was whispering as he lay at last upon his bed of agony, what they heard was, "*He suffered more for me.*"'

¶ There is a passage in Macaulay's *History* which is worth quoting. It is the account of the flogging of 'Julian' Johnson under James II.: 'Three hundred and seventeen stripes were laid on; but the sufferer never winced. He afterwards said that the pain was cruel, but that, as he was dragged at the tail of the cart, he remembered how patiently the Cross had been borne up Mount Calvary, and was so much supported by the thought that, but for the fear of incurring the suspicion of vainglory, he would have sung a psalm with as firm and cheerful a voice as if he had been worshipping God in the congregation.'[1]

3. *The Light it casts on the Ideal of a Christian Life.*—For what is Christ doing here? He is doing what He did when He veiled His Godhead, when He went down to the wonderful obedience and long seclusion of Nazareth, when He refused the easy ways of life, when He chose the path of holy self-denial. He is facing the duty which must be done, He is fitting Himself for doing it in a supremely noble way, and He is doing it, cost what it may to body and to soul. And that is the ideal of a Christian life.

To-day we have ceased to realize the moral grandeur and the spiritual exaltation of such an ideal. We have ceased to realize that it is the ideal of Jesus. All the sterner stress of His life has fallen out of view. His great words about self-denial and cross-bearing are emptied of meaning, and His hard sayings are discounted. We feel that for us to say we 'are crucified with Christ' would be to practise cant, and the words are not found upon our lips. The Christian life is not a cramped, mean, narrow round. Every

[1] Macaulay, *History*, ch. vi.

faculty should be sanctified and ennobled by Christ. 'The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' the three most desirable and most satisfying things in the world. But Jesus insisted that life should first be safe, and then broad, and no liberty was ever given beyond the narrow way of holy and needful self-denial.

Who speaketh now of peace?
Who seeketh for release?
The Cross is strength, the solemn Cross is gain.
Who willeth now to choose?
Who strives to bind or loose?
Sweet life, sweet death, sweet triumph and sweet pain.

4. *The Light it casts on the Crises of Life.*—There is one last lesson which may direct and strengthen some who are in special need. All of us come to times of crisis in our lives. We are called upon to choose or to reject some proffered gift, to take a step which determines all our future, or to accept some limiting conditions. Some burden is placed upon our shoulders which shall slip from us only at death. Some message is given us which shows only a chilling prospect in days to come, or points to a narrowed and straitened life. How many have missed all that makes life worth living, because they have not known the meaning of their hour, and have not seized its blessing. But a still subtler peril—a temptation yielded to every day—is to take up the cup of wine mingled with myrrh; to escape with some easier, and indulgent fulfilment; to find some ignoble palliative; to drug the soul with some base expedient; to escape from a hard life by a loveless marriage; to accept a duty, and fulfil it with meagre sacrifices; to leave the path of a limiting poverty, under the temptation of an unrighteous reward; to lower the ideal of life because it is difficult in new circumstances—these are ways of drinking the cup of wine mingled with myrrh. As we stand at the foot of our cross, let us accept it meekly, and with a holy disdain for all that would unfit us for it, and we shall find it a source of redemption for others, and the very exaltation of ourselves.

¶ After attaining to wealth by his writings, Scott, by mismanagement, on his own part and on that of others, was reduced almost to poverty. He was unable to pay his way, and was thousands of pounds in debt. 'If I am hard pressed,' he wrote, 'and measures used against me, I must use all means of legal defence, and subscribe myself a bankrupt in a petition for sequestration. It is the course one should, at any rate, have advised a client to take. But for this I would, in a Court of Honour, deserve to lose my spurs. No, if they permit me, I will be their vassal for life, and dig in the mine of my imagination to find diamonds (or what may sell for such) to make good my engagements, not to enrich myself. And this from no reluctance to be called the Insolvent, which I probably am, but because I will not put out of the power of my creditors the resources, mental or literary, which yet remain to me.'[1]

The King of the Jews

Mark xv. 26.—'And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King of the Jews.'

All four Evangelists give the inscription over the cross. Though they vary slightly in detail, they all include the vital phrase, 'the King of the Jews.' And St Luke and St John agree that it was written in the three languages of that time—Greek and Latin and Hebrew. We should remember that the cross was not a lofty erection such as is generally represented in pictures. It only raised the head of the sufferer some foot and a half above that of the bystanders. So Jesus could hear the jibes aimed at Him, and speak to John and His mother. The 'title,' a piece of wood covered with white gypsum on which the nature of the condemned man's crime was written, was carried before Him, and when He was nailed to His cross this board was fixed over His head. As to the bare words, 'the King of the Jews,' Klausner writes: 'The sly tyrant could not resist the pleasure of jibing at the Jewish nation by means of an inscription above the cross: "Behold how we the Romans inflict the most ignominious of deaths upon the so-called King of the Jews."'[2]

Pilate knew how the chief priests would wince as they read these words over Christ's head. But he did not know that into those words he condensed the consummating claim of Christ.

[1] J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, viii. 209.
[2] Charles Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 171.

The mockery of a moment was the truth of all time.

He is a King! O Pilate, weak and vain,
The King of kings; the angels at His word
Leave their high seats. They count His service gain,
While Seraphim adoring call Him Lord!

He is a King, by Love condemned to die
For deathless souls. O sacrifice most great!
And Adam saw His day with ecstasy
Which brightened even Eden's outer gate.

Nail to the Cross amid the gathering gloom.
Pierce His dead side. Then when thy wrath is spent,
And thou hast placed armed watchers round the tomb,
He'll burst all bonds and rise omnipotent! [1]

1. *Christ's Claim.*—(1) He claimed, to begin with, to be *the final moral authority of the race.* When He stood up in the synagogues, when He spoke at men's tables or to the multitudes by the seashore or in the Temple, He claimed to make the final and absolute revelation of the things of God. 'We know,' said Nicodemus, 'that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest unless God be with him.' The Jewish rabbi was only summing up the impression Christ had already made upon his time. He swept away all previous teaching which He could not approve with His 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' When men came with the questions of the soul which had been the mystery and pain of human minds for centuries, Jesus sat down with them as a scholar would with a child, and in a word He made all things clear. Nor was He content to be a teacher. He exacted a close personal loyalty and a rigorous obedience. No one ever claimed such a complete masterhood over men as Jesus. 'Follow me,' is His first and His last command. To His people still, for all questions of faith and conduct, all problems of life and of love, Christ remains the supreme and imperative moral authority.

¶ John Stuart Mill uttered the deliberate conviction of the wisest thinkers of our modern world when he wrote that 'not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'

(2) A second claim Jesus made was to *a perfect holiness.* This claim very naturally was seldom openly on His lips. Only once, when slander was busy with His life and depreciation was quick with its scorn, did He put the question, 'Which man of you convicteth me of sin?' But the claim of sinlessness shines in a sublime vividness in every word and act throughout the whole fabric of His life. It is the one truth to which the disciples cling without even thinking it worth while to defend it. There is one sign of it which is deeply significant. Jesus never prayed with His disciples. 'After this manner pray *ye*,' He said to them. 'Our Father which art in heaven—forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Jesus did not need to pray for the forgiveness of sins. He walked from His cradle in stainless moral beauty, among the daisies and lilies of Nazareth, in the narrow ways of Capernaum, and through the crowded streets of Jerusalem, until He walked up the way of His Cross, able to say, 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

¶ Renan's Jesus is a charming Galilean with a certain sympathy for beautiful scenery and an affectionate tenderness for the peasants who follow him; but he is provoked to violence, impatience, base trickery, as soon as he finds his mission as a reformer unsuccessful. The Frenchman, bred amidst pious frauds, calls him the most delightful and wonderful of men, who practises innocent artifices, resorts to thaumaturgy unwillingly, but when he does resort to it is guilty of wilful imposture beside the grave of his friend. We in England should say he was a horrible liar and audacious blasphemer. We should pronounce the Jews right in the judgment which they passed upon him. To me the book is detestable, morally as well as theologically. It has brought to my mind, as I have said in my paper on it, that wonderful dream of Richter's in which Jesus tells the universe, 'Children, you have no Father.' [1]

(3) A third claim of Jesus is to be *the judge of all men.* It is one of the slightly noticed marvels of Christ's life that all who stand in His presence find themselves judged. Men came to Him with condescension. They assailed Him with criticism. They looked upon Him with eyes of

[1] A. H. Lash, *Dawn and other Sacred Poems*, 11.

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, ii. 464.

arrogance. Before the interview was over, they were driven to self-defence, or escaping from His presence with accusing consciences. The tax-gatherer cries out in confession and in promise of amendment when Christ's eyes look upon his dishonest wealth. Pharisees slink out of the range of His eyes as He looks round about in moral indignation. Pilate finds himself at Christ's bar. The disciples cannot face Him with any proud ambition, or in any sulky mood, but the thoughts of their hearts are revealed, and themselves condemned.

¶ The poet Whittier, in his preface to the Journal of John Woolman, the eminent Quaker saint, writes these words: 'There must have been something awful in the presence of one endowed with the gift of looking through all the forms, shows, and pretensions of society, and detecting with certainty the germs of evil hidden beneath them; a man gentle and full of compassion, clothed in "the irresistible might of meekness," and yet so wise in spiritual discernment.' [1]

What Christ claimed in parable and in prophecy, what men felt instinctively when He was on earth, as we all feel it now, was what Paul declared in his solemn words, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.'

(4) But Christ's greatest claim is to be *a king*. As a matter of simple fact, Christ did not achieve His kinghood until He hung where Pilate nailed Him, and set His title over His head, on the Cross. It is the Cross of Christ which is His throne. It was because He hung upon the Cross that His followers went out into all the lands where Cæsar's name was known speaking of 'Another king, one Jesus.' This claim of kinghood was long kept as the secret of His heart, but it was always trembling on His lips. It became clear and appealing in His parables. At the close of His ministry it absorbed His mind, and in the day of the Cross all else had shrunk into a comparative significance. The claim up to which the whole passion of Christ's purpose rises is to be the Messiah of the people of God, the king of a kingdom, spiritual, universal, eternal.

¶ When upon one occasion the Emperor Justinian was about to surrender to the clamorous claims and the harsh and violent demands of the mob, his wife Theodora is represented to have said to him that it was better to meet and go down to death as the avowed ruler of all than purchase life for a little while by yielding to the unworthy exactions of the unrighteous few; and empire, she tells him, 'is the best winding-sheet.' Empire, universal empire, throughout all the world, throughout all the ages, is the winding-sheet of Jesus Christ. Victorious in the wilderness, victorious in Gethsemane, before that worldly-minded governor in the judgment hall, victorious on the Cross, because His eye looked not upon the unworthy demands of the immediate occasion, but upon the everlasting years, upon all future times, and wrapped around in the winding-sheet of empire does He die.[1]

2. *The Proof of Christ's Claim.*—(1) The first line of proof must lie within *the Gospels*. The chief priests sum up the gospel evidence when they tell Pilate, 'He said, he was the king of the Jews.' Yet there are some who read the Gospels and see Jesus the mystic, and Jesus the prophet, Jesus the reformer, and Jesus the Son of Man, but not Jesus the king. When we look at the story, the truth, wholly independent of single words and sentences, is that Jesus knew Himself to be the king for whom the devout hearts of Israel had waited. No subject leads us into deeper mysteries than that of the awaking of Christ's Messianic consciousness. It is precisely that awaking which is marked in the gospel with a solemn and deeply felt awe. The enlargement of Christ's consciousness makes what Coleridge would have called 'the landing places' of His experience. We see Him in the Temple becoming conscious that He must be about His Father's business. We mark Him attaining clearer light as He consecrates Himself at His baptism and as He passes immediately into the perfecting discipline of His temptation. We see Him again on the Mount of Transfiguration accepting His crown of death. We see Him at the last, when He no longer finds any need of withholding His secret, entering Jerusalem in the state and with the honour of a king. And we mark that this claim of His kinghood so absorbs and inspires His people that every other grace and power sinks into the shadow. His moral authority is rarely mentioned. His sinlessness is accepted almost in silence. His transcendent office as judge is appealed to chiefly to comfort His persecuted with the certainty that righteousness shall prevail. But this is what they read in the

[1] *The Journal of John Woolman*, p. 38.

[1] D. H. Greer, *From Things to God*, 36.

Gospels, with a constant joy, that Christ is on the throne, that His Kingdom shall be over all, and that He shall reign for ever and ever.

(2) This first line of proof broadens out to a second, which may have a more convincing appeal for some minds. That proof is *the history of Christendom* and the increasing dominion of its Christ. Who is king to-day? Enter any picture gallery and you will find that the face which hangs on every wall is the face of Him in whom the excellency of the knowledge of the glory of God has been revealed. Take up the masters of literature. Whose life are they striving to interpret, whose teaching do they enforce, whose words yield them their freshest thought? They are the life and the teaching and the words of Jesus. Pilate and the chief priests believed that a few lines in the records of an obscure province of the Roman Empire would tell the whole story of a simple Jewish dreamer who was crucified and was buried in Jerusalem. Before two centuries had passed that simple dreamer was the only king of the Jews that the world cared to remember, and His hand was shaking the imperial throne to its fall. Since that day every empire which has opposed His Kingdom has perished. The kings and rulers of the predominant peoples of the earth to-day claim to rule only in His name and by His grace. Were a new commandment of His to be discovered by the men who are digging in the dust heaps of Egypt, the whole world would stand still to listen, and millions would be swift to obey. History will not allow us to make any mistake about the consummating claim of Christ. To history Jesus is the king.

¶ In the words of Jean Paul Richter: 'He, being the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.'

(3) A third line of proof is *the personal devotion of His subjects*. The imagination falters when it attempts in a backward glance to call up the millions who have lived and died for Jesus. The unquestioned heroes of humanity are the saints and martyrs of Christ. Their sainthood at its best and highest has the wisdom and sanity and joy and the splendour of sacrifice which only the devotion to their king can give.

¶ Livingstone when found dead upon his knees in Central Africa, had his diary open before him, and the last entry was, 'My Jesus, my Saviour, my Life, my all, anew I dedicate myself to Thee.'

Towards this claim of Christ we may take up the attitude of the priests and deny it. Or like Pilate we may disregard it. Or, like Mary Magdalene and Joseph the councillor and John the disciple, we may bow down in consent. But whether a man deny it, or disregard it, or consent to it in devotion, he comes to a day when he finds his verdict unalterable, and he uses the words of Pilate either in pride or in petulance or in adoring gladness, 'What I have written I have written.' Now that day when a man's attitude toward Christ is unalterably fixed is one of the most momentous in a human life. It may come very early in youth or it may come very late. The verdict may also be long left open. Yet here lies the peril of this undetermined attitude to Christ. Opportunity after opportunity may present itself. But, at last, in some decisive act, in some word or deed of glory or of shame, in some choice in which a man feels he is moved by a power not himself, the verdict is given, and that verdict is unalterable.

¶ When Goethe retold the legend of Faust, the truth which his genius made the climax of his drama was this truth of the unalterable verdict. Faust had made his compact with the evil one. For four-and-twenty years he had enjoyed all that a wicked heart could desire. But in this heart of Faust, underneath his callous bargaining, there lurks the thought that there may be, and there shall be, some way of escape. As the hours of the last day of his liberty pass, the man is in an agony seeking escape, like a beast caught in a trap. But the tragedy runs to its remorseless close. Salvation at times seems to be within his reach for a single word. But that word he cannot speak. He had really passed his verdict on truth and purity and honour and the service of God, and that verdict is unalterable.[1]

Love's Necessity

Mark xv. 31.—'Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.'

Our eyes are drawn in the gospel story away from the Crucified to the crowd that surrounds

[1] W. M. Clow.

the cross. Among the several groups are the rulers—chief priests, scribes, and elders—who surpass all others in the keenness of their mockery. As they pace up and down they do not look up at Jesus, but speak 'among themselves,' so that He may hear. The words which their consuming envy fashions express both their argument and their triumph—'He saved others; himself he cannot save.' The fact that His enemies not only admit His miracles, but make them the basis of a charge and a jibe is important testimony to the reality of the healing ministry which Jesus exercised. There is no harm in admitting this now, for evidently now when He should put forth His might, now when, if Godhead be His, He should come down from the cross, now when Roman hands compel Him, and iron nails transfix Him, His impotence is revealed—'himself he cannot save.'

This taunt, set now in the light of the cross, holds a truth which these blind persecutors could not see. It asserts in the concisest terms the necessity of sacrifice in salvation. But it is not the necessity of impotence but the necessity of truth and love.

When scorn, and hate, and bitter envious pride
Hurled all their darts against the Crucified,
Found they no fault but this in Him so tried?
'He saved others!'

Those hands, thousands their healing touches knew;
On withered limbs they fell like heavenly dew;
The dead have felt them and have lived anew:
'He saved others!'

The blood is dropping slowly from them now;
Thou canst not raise them to Thy thorn-crown'd brow,
Nor on them Thy parched lips and forehead bow;
'He saved others!'

That Voice from out their graves the dead hath stirred;
Crushed, outcast hearts, grew joyful as they heard;
For every woe it had a healing word:
'He saved others!'

For all Thou hadst deep tones of sympathy—
Hast Thou no word for this Thine agony?
Thou pitiedst all; doth no man pity Thee?
'He saved others!'

So many fettered hearts Thy touch hath freed,
Physician! and Thy wound unstaunched must bleed;
Hast Thou no balm for this Thy sorest need?
'He saved others!'

Lord! and one sign from Thee could rend the sky,
One word from Thee, and low those mockers lie;
Thou mak'st no movement, utterest no cry,
And savest us.[1]

1. The question that is raised by the challenge thus addressed to Jesus in His dying agony is one of really first-rate importance. It touches the deepest meanings of His character and mission. It is fundamental to our understanding of what it meant to be the Son of God. Whatever else Divine Sonship may mean, at any rate the Son of God must be like God. One claiming to be the Incarnate Son must show us how the character of God manifests itself under the conditions of a human life. What we want to know about God, and what a true Son of God must be able to show us, is God's behaviour amongst men and towards men.

In regard to the particular matter on which the chief priests challenged Jesus, there are two possibilities, and we want to know which of them is true.

(1) One is, that to be Divine means to possess all—all power, all privilege, all glory—and to enjoy possession to the full. If that be a true conception of Divinity, then the Son of God, appearing amongst men, will show His Divinity by possessing unlimited powers, and by constantly using those powers to save Himself, avoiding by their aid all hardship and weariness and pain and risk and danger. The impression He will create amongst men will be that of a glorified magician. Apparently that is what His mockers thought Jesus ought to be if His claims were true. He ought to be able to foil His enemies by some *tour de force*, to come down from the Cross and to save Himself before the eyes of an awe-struck multitude. But the world would never have been moved by a conjurer.

¶ General Booth is reported to have said, commenting on the mocking challenge that Christ should come down from the Cross, 'They would have believed in Him, had He come down; we believe in Him because He stayed up.'

[1] Elizabeth R. Charles.

(2) The other possibility is that to be Divine means to possess all, and to have wherewith to give to all. And if that be the true conception of Divinity, if the very essence of the character of God is not self-glorification, but love, then the Son of God appearing amongst men will show His Divinity by a constant use of His power for men's good. He will be ever giving, bestowing, serving, without counting the cost; ever loving men with self-sacrificing love.

And this second possibility was the one that expressed Christ's conception of the Divine nature and character. The power was there, but He *could not* save Himself because of what He was, which made it impossible for Him to act out of harmony with the Divine character.[1]

¶ 'He saved us,' says Newbolt of a British General in the War, who extricated us from a crushing disaster, 'he saved us by being himself.'

2. Sacrifice, for those who have eyes to see, always crowns with thorns. The Cross is bound up with the life of man. And yet, through these very toils and pains has come the well-being of humanity. There is no liberty which has lifted high the heart of man, and set his energies to the deeds of freedom, no skill which has perfected his dominion, no knowledge which has enriched his mind, no hope which has inspired his spirit, which has not been won by the sore stress and costly sacrifice of those who saved others because they cared not to save themselves.

¶ In the Princess Beatrice Ward of the London Hospital there is a tablet erected to the memory of Mandombi, a Nigerian chieftain. About thirty years ago Mandombi became a Christian under the influence of the late Doctor Grattan Guinness, and shortly afterwards was smitten with the terrible scourge of tropical countries, 'sleeping sickness.' With this sad fate upon him Mandombi conceived the idea of making the rest of his life one great sacrifice for mankind. He therefore communicated to Doctor Guinness his desire that he might be made a subject of experiment for the benefit of other sufferers. He was brought to England and installed in the London Hospital, under the care of the late Sir Stephen Mackenzie. This was the first appearance in England of beri-beri, and it was admitted solely in the interests of science. The House Physician, Arthur St le Fagan, examined the blood of the patient every four hours for two months. This research was rewarded by the eventual discovery of the trypanosome, which is the chief cause of the disease. It was not found possible to save the chief's life, but through his thoughtful self-devotion literally millions of lives, both white and black, have since been saved.[1]

A sacrifice which is wholly noble and perfectly beautiful must fulfil two conditions. It must be a willing sacrifice impelled by love, and it must have a worthy purpose.

(1) The first reason why so much of the sacrifice of self is so dark is because it is not done with *the eager consent of the will.* Even when circumstance has compelled to some costly toil, if the will be given to it a certain grace shines in it. But when the will is heartily given a heroic deed is done. It does not seem likely, but it is a possibility, that a sacrifice may be willing and yet fail in the motive of love. For Paul, the master of experience, contemplates the case when he says: 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, I am nothing.' Into every sacrifice which has greatness and beauty some love has entered. A deed of self-sacrifice may be costly, it may be heroic, but it will not be one of entrancing beauty, satisfying both mind and heart, unless it be rooted and grounded in love. The sacrifices which ask no questions, count no cost, seek no personal gain, but give all and lose all—the sacrifice of a father for his children, of a patriot for his country, of a true disciple for a noble master — are wholly beautiful and entirely blessed, for they are the sacrifices of love. We need only to look at sacrifice as love's necessity in any experience to find how Divine it is.

¶ Everyone knows of Garibaldi's passionate love for Italy. He issued his appeal (1862) for volunteers, and promptly King Victor Emmanuel issued a counter proclamation against the intractable hero who had placed him on the throne. A month later, Garibaldi was leading his men straight for Rome, when he found himself face to face with the Royal army of Italy, dispatched to check his advance. 'The moment,' he said in after years, 'was a terrible one for me, forced as I was to choose whether we would lay down our arms like sheep or stain ourselves with the blood of our brothers.' The king was more concerned about his crown than he was about

[1] E. G. Loosley, *Through the Eyes of His Enemies*, 144.

[1] A. D. Belden.

the blood of his subjects, and so the issue was not long in doubt. Before midday the Garibaldian host was scattered to the four winds, and Garibaldi was a prisoner of war with an Italian bullet in his hip and another in his ankle. To the onlookers, it was a case of utter defeat, whereas it was the most glorious thing in his life. There was one thing he loved more than himself, and that was his beloved Italy. He was a wounded, helpless prisoner, not because he was weak or lacked men, but because he simply couldn't shed Italian blood.[1]

(2) The second condition of a wholly beneficent sacrifice is that it must have *a worthy purpose.* A sacrifice made for a selfish end evokes no honour. The youth who bends his energies to the amassing of a fortune, or the gaining of a name, may scorn delights and live laborious days, and with an eager will deny himself much he might enjoy. Warren Hastings kept the vow of his early youth, that he would restore the broken fortunes of his family, in a stern self-restraint, an unflagging toil, and a life shut out from ease; but his unworthy purpose corrupted his soul, and his hands were steeped in infamy. Even a father may blemish his sacrifice for his children if his end be merely their material advancement. It is when a high and holy purpose animates the soul that self-sacrifice puts on both strength and beauty. When a nation rises in revulsion at some horrible wrong, as when it rids itself of the blot of slavery by a costly sum; when a people dares to speak and to act for the oppressed; when a statesman sacrifices his career for the sake of a deep conviction; when a man gives his life to heal dissension and to lessen disease, we realize how supremely great and beautiful a thing sacrifice is. We do not for one moment grieve over its necessity. And when a still worthier purpose animates men; when they are moved of the Holy Ghost to save souls; when their hearts beat with desire to redeem man from his bondage to base passion, his brutal cruelty, his darkness of mind, his ignorance and crouching fear of God, and they go forth to die under the shadeless trees of Africa, to live among the lepers of Samoa, to have their youth quenched in death by the fevers of the Congo, to toil through long and patient years among the sunken and fallen—then we see sacrifice transfigured, then we cry with an exultant leap in the heart: 'He saved others; himself he cannot save.'

[1] J. Bevan, *The Garden before the Cross*, 40.

When we look at the cross of Jesus with this transfigured saying in our minds, we are lost in wonder, love, and praise. We see Jesus dying in a perfect willingness. It was not the Roman guard that compelled Him to His cross, and not the driven nails that held Him to its beams. 'I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me.' 'Thus it behoved Christ to suffer.' We see Him dying for the noblest purpose the human mind can conceive. There is really no other purpose great but the redeeming of man, body, soul, and spirit, from the dominion of evil, and the restoring of the image of God upon him. Every pure purpose among men is but its faint reflection.

Do we share Christ's point of view? Deep down in our inmost souls, are we like Christ in character and purpose, or are we like His mockers? If we should find ourselves with leisure and a competency, would the vista opening out before us be one of endless opportunities for self-gratification; or would it be one of boundless possibilities of service? As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; and the Christ upon the cross challenges us, not only to approve of His outlook, but also to share it.

The Church's Temptation

Mark xv. 32.—'Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.'

1. When the priests and rulers had secured the death of Jesus, they believed that they had put an end to Him and to that whole idea of Messiahship which He had let loose upon the world. There they saw Him in the agonies of death. And they said to one another—God knows it may have been to keep up each other's courage—they said, 'What we have done is quite just.' 'If He is the Christ, let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him.' But Christ remained upon the cross. In a true and sublime sense Christ remains upon the cross until the world shall be gathered round Him there in perfect sympathy and obedience. And because He *will* hang upon the cross, because He *will* suffer, because He *will* remain there just above our heads, so that when we look up at all we shall see Him—He is still an offence.

¶ 'Crush that wretch!' cried Voltaire when he saw, in his delirium, Christ with His cross at the foot of his bed.

The demand that Christ should come off the cross is still being made by a hostile and misunderstanding world. And the demand comes to-day, as it has always come, from two different classes of people.

(1) There are those who cry to Christ to come down from the cross and put Himself at their head as their leader. There are those who would have Him abandon His position of aloofness and superiority, and come right down into the ranks of the people. They would have Him declare Himself the leader of their party, the Divine champion of their rights. They cry, 'Let Him announce Himself as frankly and entirely a man, as the representative of the oppressed, let Him adopt our point of view, and we will believe Him, nay, we will die under His banner.'

That was the very temptation which Christ encountered in the wilderness, and it was the last suggestion which He heard on the cross. What was it? That He should come down, that He should throw aside His own tremendous sense of God and of the Soul, that He should accommodate Himself to the worldly or half-worldly ideals of the people. That He should become a popular hero, leading the people by a short route to the securing of their own vivid ambitions. And so it comes to pass that, in our own day, Christ is often accused of standing in the way of popular movements. There is something there in Him hanging upon a cross which is felt to be the rebuke and contradiction of every merely secular enthusiasm. He is the friend of the people; indeed, He is their only friend. It was He who gave them their very soul, and yet He will not be their Leader. And so they are offended. Come down from the cross, they cry, put Thyself at our head, and we will follow Thee were it through blood and fire. But He does not come down. He is with them, yet is He not of them. And the reason is two-fold. Christ is something more and other than the succourer of the poor and oppressed. He is the Saviour of the world; and He who would save us must reserve the right also to rebuke us and to put us to shame. That is the one reason. And the other reason is this: from the cross He can do more even for the masses of men than He could do were He one of themselves.

¶ The attempt has often been made to represent Christ as if he were a sort of partisan Christ; to quote Him in support of this or the other economic or political system. Thus there are those who quote Him in justification of the existing economic order, and there are others who would over-turn the whole fabric of society from its foundations and who seek to justify their wild schemes by the authority of Jesus, whom they speak of as the 'Carpenter-Revolutionist.' Both sides are equally and utterly wrong. It is impossible to make Christ a sectional or partisan Christ. It is of no use trying to thrust the banner of the class war into His pierced hands. He came to create a spirit, a spirit of love and of sacrificial and unselfish ministry. It is impossible to represent Christ as the friend and saviour of a class of men alone. He is the friend and saviour of all.[1]

(2) The same cry that Christ should come off the cross arises, and has always arisen, from another class of people. If there are those whose cry is, 'Come down from the cross, come down to the common earth, be one of ourselves, and lead us with the enthusiasms and catch-words of the hour,' there are others whose cry to Christ, if they would only have the courage to utter it, is rather, 'Come off the cross and go away up once for all into heaven. Let us fight our battle free from the disturbance which always comes to us when we look up and see Thee there on the cross. Don't let us have religion brought into our public affairs. Business is business. Come off Thy cross. Ascend up into heaven. Let us think of Thee there surrounded by the pomp and pageantry of Infinite Power. But do not occupy the foreground with that hateful symbol of meekness, of suffering, of self-sacrifice, of love.'

2. There is a true sense in which the temptation of Jesus is just the temptation of the Church in every age. There is a true sense in which the Church is always being called upon to undergo and repeat the experience of her Lord. There is a sense in which, if she is faithful to Christ who dwells within her, she also will meet the same reproaches and the same kind of comment from the world. Among other reproaches which the Church is meeting in our day is just this very reproach which was flung at Jesus as He was slowly dying, 'Come down from the cross and

[1] J. D. Jones, in *Record of Christian Work*, Dec. 1925.

we will believe Thee.' That is still a cry which is intended as a condemnation. When men discuss the shortcomings of the Church, what is the word most frequently on their lips? Is it not some synonym for 'helplessness'? There is something that the people would like the Church to do that it seems unable to do. Those who constitute the Church must therefore ask, in the pure white light of God's truth, whether this helplessness differs from the same trait in Jesus. For He failed His critics at the one point of their demand on Him. He could not come down from the cross and lead a sweeping majority-movement. It follows that any society which incarnates His Spirit will bear that very mark. It will fail the public just in the manner in which He failed the public. Men say, 'Let the Church come down among us. Let her cease speaking so much about unworldly things, about sin, about forgiveness, about the moral judgment which awaits mankind, and about the eternal issues of our life here in this world. Let the Church be in the van of everything popular and enthusiastic, and associate herself once for all with the movement of the time.'

There are others who make the same demand, though with a different intention entirely. 'Come off the cross,' these say. 'Let religion mind her own business, and keep well away from our controversies. Let religion remain up among the clouds—a thing to attend to when we are getting old or when we fall into some dangerous illness. But don't let it interrupt our worldly ambitions; let these be fought out with the weapons of the world.'

But the Church, if she is faithful to her Lord, hears the taunt and remains upon the Cross; that is, neither altogether on the earth nor altogether in heaven, but in contact with both, casting the shadow of a rebuke upon the one, purifying and correcting all idle gazing towards the other.[1]

3. A danger that threatens the commending of the Cross to the modern man is that he will thrust back the onus of the Cross on the God of Jesus. 'If thou be the Son of God — then, why?' Why is the Cross the only way out? Can it really be true that to eliminate the Cross from our human experience, from the apologetic of the Church of Christ, from the soul of any Christian nation, is a feat outside the entire scope of Infinite Power?

The only answer is that the Cross is God's ultimate word. We believe that there are, from our standpoint, things which God cannot do and things which He cannot avoid doing; there are courses to which He is morally held because they are secondary to primal courses which we do not fully grasp. The Cross is here; let that suffice us. Life's countless trials confirm the fact, our overtaxing struggle to be decent men supports it, the fact that the world's way is not finally the right way goes to prove it. The only way to grasp the meaning of the Cross is to bear it for the Will and Mind of God. It was impossible for Jesus to come down from it, not because He was not God's Son, but because He was. He could not have come down from it and have remained God's Son. Nor is there for us any easier way. Calvary is the price of any redeeming ideal.[1]

If there had anywhere appeared in space
  Another place of refuge, where to flee,
Our hearts had taken refuge in that place,
    And not with Thee.

For we against creation's bars had beat
  Like prisoned eagles, through great worlds had sought
Though but a foot of ground to plant our feet,
    Where Thou wert not.

And only when we found in earth and air,
  In heaven or hell, that such might nowhere be—
That we could not flee from Thee anywhere,
    We fled to Thee.[2]

[1] J. A. Hutton. [1] Edward Beal. [2] R. C. Trench.

THE CRY OF DERELICTION

Mark xv. 34.—'And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

THERE was gross darkness upon Calvary. God's own hand, with deliberation, drew a thick veil between us and the sufferings of our Lord. And, even yet, it is not seemly to peer and pry too closely—like anatomists about an operating table—into that appalling mystery. Better stand still in a stunned hush of spirit gazing silently till the thing storms our hearts, makes it impossible to keep ourselves from One who went this length for us. And for the rest, there is much wisdom in that finding of à Kempis—that we shall best understand Christ's Cross, not by discussing it, either with heat or in cold logic, but by carrying our own cross after Him.

But nowhere is the darkness quite so dense as in this verse, on which, almost certainly, it is foolish to attempt to speak. For we are on the margin of something far too tremendous for our minds to grasp, or even picture. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, but are infinitely deeper, huger, vaster. And this is the working out of the deepest and most Godlike of them all. Can we even begin to understand how, from some thin and tenuous fire mist, He formed this solid earth; or tell how life came into being in the world? And the saving of a whole humanity—if it will have it—is something still more wonderful by far, that staggers and confuses us. Dimly we see that the cost of our salvation is a thing incalculable; and that Christ's physical sufferings—hideous though these were—(have they not given us that word 'excruciating' in which we sum up agony all but past bearing) were, none the less, the least of it. Have you noticed the extraordinary reticence of Scripture about them? Art seeks to harrow us by dwelling on the wounds and blood and bodily travail. But in the Scriptures they look past all that to something infinitely more heartbreaking still, something they see but can't describe, except in startling metaphors that often puzzle more than help—'He was made sin for us'; 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all'; 'Christ was accursed for us.' Dark sayings surely at the best, which Luther underlines so thickly that his words grow meaningless to me: 'It is not absurd to say that of all sinners Christ was the greatest,' and the like. But all of us must see that here on Calvary we are facing the climax of human history, in which good and evil front each other foot to foot in a last hideous clash. And what that meant for Christ we cannot even faintly realize. For we have gone down so often and so easily in tame little skirmishes that we can't imagine what the full force of the assault pressed home with all evil's terrific power in one last desperate onslaught must have been. But something of the strain and agony of it even for Christ comes home to us in this tremendous cry, heartshaking, terrifying, because spoken by His voice—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

What can that mean? Does it not seem, at least, as if, on any interpretation of it, it must be the loss of one or other of the two most precious of all things? If God forsook Christ in His time of direst need does not the story of His lovingkindness and His grace collapse as a proved fairy tale? And if God stood by Christ, then did He who, tempted to the uttermost, came through it gallantly, with His head up, and steady eyes, and never a doubt of God, falter and fail at the last step, dimming His splendour, going out, in spite of the long glory of the struggle, beaten and daunted, and even, as some dare to hold, with His very soul drowned and whirled away in some wild sea of black despair?

There are those who seek to evade the dilemma by spinning artificial and mechanical theories with no warm human blood or feeling of reality in them, calmly denying Christ's assumptions, and picturing God—here at least—as, not a Father, but a Judge austerely just and carrying through some intricate implacable legal requirement, till the story of the Prodigal (which we ourselves have proved to be true), and of the heart at home that could not rest for thinking of the foolish lad, and the eyes that hungrily watched the road, and the arms leaping out in a quick eager welcome round the shabby, hirpling, inexcusable thing, seem very far away. But that won't do. Here, at the testing place, one can't dismiss Christ's axioms without discrediting Him altogether.

And others speak of Christ in an oddly abstract and formal fashion. They have told

themselves so often—what is true—that He is not just an Individual, but the Second Adam, and the representative of humanity, that they forget that, whatever else and more He was, His was a heart like ours, that walked by faith, and looked to God, and leant on God, and needed God. Such explanations of the Cross don't help us much. Sully, the psychologist, tells of a mother reading Bible stories to her child, and passing over one of them on the ground that it was too difficult for her to understand, whereat the little voice broke in, 'I can understand them all perfectly well, if only you wouldn't explain them to me.' These people are like botanists leaving a little withering heap, and saying, 'There is your flower, and that's all there is in it.' But it isn't. Their summary of pistils and stamens and petals and the like may be scientifically accurate; but what made the flower a flower is gone. That has evaded them. And these theories of what happened at the Cross make dreary reading, leave one quite unthrilled and cold. And yet the Cross itself haunts, masters, lays compulsion on us, as Christ said it would.

And still what does this mean? Did God really in very fact forsake Christ? 'Yet I am not alone' He used to say in His valorous way, 'for the Father is with me.' And did that Father at last really turn away? There are those who have no doubt He did, and find in that the heart and centre of the gospel. Mrs Browning, for example, in her moving poem upon Cowper's grave sums it all up—

Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'
It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!

Apparently, like the scapegoat, loaded with sins, and led into the bleakness of the wilderness, Christ the Sin Bearer passed into an awful Loneliness, cut off even from God—dared that, did that, for you and me, took on Himself the alienation from God that is ours. A staggering metaphor, bringing home awesomely the amazement of the Cross. Only what does it mean? For is God alienated from any one? Wronged, injured, wounded? Yes. But alienated? Sometimes we are from Him; tire of Him, fling away from Him, tell Him bluntly and to His face that we are sick of Him, cry peevishly, 'Let us alone,' wish that there were no God to bother us! But He can't give us up, not even the worst of us, keeps following us like a beggar, so Paul says, waits when we are too busy and breaks in again on us when we have any leisure to attend to Him, pleading with us to be reconciled to Him who has nothing but love for us in spite of all our waywardness, forsakes no one of us, do what we will, can't give us up. Surely that is the God Christ has revealed to us.

Or, again, it is true that the glory of Christ's sacrifice lies in the faith that could believe on in the absolute dark, and the obedience still obedient even when tested to the very uttermost. And are we to understand that, so to test Christ, God withdrew, and left Him there alone without the aids and helps He might have given Him, as even M'Leod Campbell supposes.

To me that just won't think. Surely never was God so near to Christ as in those awful hours. Doubt that, and our peace is gone and our faith shivers into fragments. For what assurance have we that He may not forsake us in our evil hour? 'Search and look the generations down,' cried a bold voice in Ecclesiasticus, 'who ever trusted in the Lord and He failed him?' 'Who?' He rings it out challengingly. 'Now tell me who? There is not one.' And can we lead him to the Cross, and pointing through the darkness answer, 'There!' and leave him dumb and silenced? 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee' promises a confident soul, speaking from long experience. And was Christ, carrying a load the like of which no other ever bore, left, though He cried to God, unanswered and unaided and alone? To be forsaken of God, is not that hell, and worse than hell? Was it not the fear of that, the dread that God had never a thought of, nor a flicker of interest in the souls in Hades that made the ancient saints shrink from it in an agony, and cling, however poor and suffering and broken, to this life where they could walk with God? And did not one, deeper and wiser, cry aloud his scorn of such a foolish terror, declaring 'even if I make my bed in Hades, Thou art there!' There, too, and still the same compassionate God as ever. And was Christ left alone, as even the souls in Hell are not—Christ daring all for God, Christ loving Him, and serving Him, and giving

all His all for Him as no one ever did! The thing won't think. Christ would not, and Christ could not, have deserted anyone in need, kept breaking through all limitations, finding reasons to make it possible to stretch things so as to reach out to this one too, though he stood really beyond the usual conditions. And is He not God's express image? 'Try you God for yourself,' our hymns keep crying to the downcast and discouraged, and you will find what we all find however desperate our case,

> God never yet forsook at need
> The soul that trusted Him indeed.

And was the greatest of Believers left the one exception to this universal law? There is no difficulty in our Lord's vicarious suffering. That is the primary law of human life and progress. Bosanquet, indeed, flung away from Christianity because of its insistence upon it, feeling that that at least is certainly untrue; yet did he not come back to the rejected faith just because life had taught him that, whatever else is doubtful, this vicarious suffering that had once stumbled him is one thing absolutely fixed and sure, and Christianity has seen and emphasized that as no faith has ever done. It was a witless jeer they flung into His face, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' Precisely so. For to save others one must sacrifice oneself; and God allows it to happen, giving the greatest of His servants the chance of it as a prerogative and privilege, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered?' as He said Himself. But that God should have held aloof, and turned away His face from Christ upon the tree, from One bringing Him that unique wholeheartedness of love and service and self-sacrifice—how could He, and why should He? All those conceptions based on some idea that Christ in some way altered God's mood toward us, making Him kind who had before been stern, seem to me blasphemous and hopelessly unscriptural. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' not standing sullenly apart, and needing to be reconciled.

If you force me into the dilemma, then better hold that our Lord's faith did falter than that God failed Him, or can fail any one. 'Let God be true even if all men are made liars,' thinks the Apostle. And with good reason. For if we cannot count on Him, if His self-sacrificing grace toward us is not a thing dependable and fixed, chaos comes back again, and life grows desperate and frightening, and there is no sure foothold anywhere, and what seemed soundest and most solid gives in our hand, and crumbles, and is gone.

But if God did not really forsake our Lord, did Christ's faith fail; was His obedience less than perfect; and the offering that He took back to God a little marred and shadowed after all? Our Lord carried Himself with such consummate gallantry, shook off contemptuously temptations against which we have to heave and struggle with souls strained to the cracking point, did the big, brave, unselfish, Godlike thing so naturally and inevitably, that we come to forget that it was not inevitable, not a kind of instinct too imperious to be resisted, but a deliberate choice every time. Reynolds told his pupils that a masterpiece must seem to be done easily. And that is what astonishes us in Christ. We pant and perspire and lay plans and swear resolutions and noisily push and fuss and bustle, and with it all, make little of this difficult life; we draw in and rub out, and try again and yet again, till we have rubbed right through the soiled and grimy paper, and still can't get it to come anything like right. While He is so effortless, so sure of touch, so masterly in doing just the absolutely perfect thing that could be done; and this in the most unexpected situations leaping out on Him with never a second's warning. Yet, though it looks as if it were dashed off, the masterpiece was not done easily. And faith was not always an easy thing for Jesus Christ. At least three times we see Him, if not staggered, at least not sure what God's will for Him is, or that this that is offered Him can really be that will. When the Greeks came to Him, and the shadow of the Cross somehow fell cold and forbiddingly upon Him, for a moment He fingered various requests, wondering which He ought to make to God, felt half inclined to ask for safety from this horror, and then cast that from Him, leaving Himself without condition in God's hands.

And again in the garden with the terror drawn quite near, to be fled from or else accepted, not at some vague future time but very now, for a while He was not sure whether God could be asking for it yet, with everything, as it seemed, still to do, and nothing so far really accom-

plished. Yet He rose up at last, and went to meet it like the Conqueror He was, stepped calmly out of the safe shadows of the trees into the ring of light and all the awfulness of Calvary, not dragged to it, but offering Himself willingly.

And here upon the cross a fearsome darkness fell about His soul. Had He had half unconsciously some hope that God would intervene on His behalf, that the twelve legions of angels would flash down indignantly to His aid? He Himself would never ask for them, nor dream of using His miraculous powers upon His own behalf, would leave Himself to God. But could God let the Saviour die with the world still unsaved? Must He not burst in for His own name's sake, and for that of a whole humanity whose only chance was slipping out? Had Christ waited and hoped and watched and known that it must come? There is no trace of any sign of that in anything He ever said, rather the certainty that there was death to face, and the apparent utter ruin of His hopes and plans. Yet as that death drew near, and His strength ebbed, and the end came in sight, think of the meaning of it all to Him. He who alone could save the world was dying with the world unsaved, with not one soul that understood, with His friends scattered, with the whole dream out, it seemed. O God! the unsaved world, the unsaved world! I gave Myself to Thee, wholly, ungrudgingly, holding back nothing; I left Myself in Thy disposal absolutely; I asked for nothing except this, that, cost Me what it might, I might be used of Thee for this. I am prepared to die, am dying for it, freely, gladly, choosing death for that. But has it failed? Has that last chance gone out? Was I too soon and rash in daring Calvary? I thought that it would draw all men to Me, and through Me unto Thee. Yet, listen how they jeer and mock—not one among them moved! O God the unsaved world! Why? Why?

There are those for whom the fact that Christ passed through experiences of that kind is an essential element of His saviourhood for them. Without these honest Scriptures they would pass Him by as of no use to them. The fact is that, although we do not realize it, and esteem ourselves heroic souls, for most of us faith has been made a very easy thing. Easy! you cry. Yes, easy; even when the big strains come. Death enters, it may be with dreadful unexpectedness; and in one moment we stand roofless, with our cosy home crumbled into a ruinous heap. Yet even then and even there we have so much to help us—our certainty of the Beyond; the thrill of picturing the glory that has crowned our dear ones—all it must mean to them; the looking forward to the wonderful re-meeting by and by—innumerable heartenings. But there are those with almost none, to whom the promises seem but an empty mockery, and God heedless and unconcerned, it seems, though things are desperate for them. A mother's boy goes hideously wrong, and though she prays with all her being, clinging to God, eagerly offering her own salvation in exchange for his, there comes no answer, and the horror soaks deeper and further down into his soul; and she dies, leaving him a wreck with settled and disgusting habits, and his will melted into a pulpy smush; or he dies and goes out like that. Why, after all her faith? Or a man is accused of crime, knows he is innocent, and yet the jury find him guilty, and the judge speaks scathingly, and the long years in penal servitude drag themselves slowly past. How difficult for him to cling to any patch of faith in any moral ordering of an insane and chaotic world that has heaped on him hideous injustice! For many faith in God is a desperate all-but impossibility. And our facile belief in no way helps them. Aye, they say, if I walked with you in the sunshine then for me also it were simple to believe. But if you were here, with my lot to face, and my load to carry, and my experience to make faith look an empty thing, you also might not be so sure. And perhaps we are too facile, ought to be startled and shocked more than we are by slums, and folk condemned to mean, drab, squalid lives, and souls grown brutalized and stunted, and all the enigmas which we dully take for granted as the way of things and never even see (unless they touch ourselves) nor try to solve. But the fact that Christ, too, had to pass through rushing waters, black and swollen, with His feet all but swept away, and under skies howling in tempest, and with never a star showing, gives them heartening and hope, and a sense of Divine comradeship. He, at least, they feel, understands; He, and God.

For as Dora Greenwell has it, 'When I looked upon my agonized and dying God, and turned from that world-appealing sight, Christ crucified for us, to look upon life's perplexed and sorrow-

ful contradictions, I was not met as in intercourse with my fellow-men by the cold platitudes that fall so lightly from the lips of those whose hearts have never known one real pang, nor whose lives one crushing blow. I was not told that all things were ordered for the best, nor assured that the overwhelming disparities of life were but apparent, but I was met from the eyes and brow of Him who was acquainted with grief by a look of solemn recognition, such as may pass between friends who have endured between them some strange and secret sorrow, and are through it united in a bond that cannot be broken.'

What the Cross proves above all else is that God forsakes no man; that He is not out of it all, indifferent to it all, as we had thought, but at the heart of all the suffering and sorrow of the world, bearing it for and with us, finding some way—heedless of what the cost to Him may be—of saving us who have brought ruin on ourselves. Sorrow and trouble come, and we can see no reason for it. Wait, we say. Our hopes and efforts end in utter failure as it seems. And our eyes turn to Calvary instinctively. It is not so, we claim. For look, was ever failure more complete than that. Yet, it was not for nothing; not in vain; no failure. But, out of that faith that seemed wasted and that trust that held on, though not understanding in the least, up that steep, stony, desperate way, look what God has accomplished for the world! And you too He has not forsaken. There is motive, meaning, wisdom, love in that that has befallen you; and you yourself will own it by and by. So says our ever mighty valiant faith, facing the dark enigmas of this staggering world. And it is just this Cross that gives it its assurance.

We are often told that Mark ends in the darkness with a beaten, disappointed Christ. It is not so, of course. He, too, knows of the Risen, Glorified, Triumphant Lord. Still, it is well other evangelists have gathered sayings from His lips upon the tree we could ill spare.

In John He dies with the shout of a Conqueror. And it is well for us to bear in mind that, as it seems, what lifted the depression from His spirit, was that the poor soul hanging there beside Him, awed by something in this strange convict suffering along with him, threw himself on His grace with a dim inchoate nebulous faith that was still faith where faith seemed utterly impossible. And it came like a reviving cup of water to our Lord's parched lips and soul. The thing was working then; and God was standing to His promises; and it was not in vain, but coming true. 'It is finished,' He cried; and gave back to God no broken hope, no failure, no mere gallantry of endeavour that had not succeeded, but a life lived out, and a tremendous task accomplished in the face of every hindrance. Let us remember that. Old Dr Duncan used to say that of all living beings he most envied the angel who stood by our Lord in the loneliness of His agony in the garden. But why not rather this strange, uncouth, most unlikely comforter when things were darker still? And yet there is no need for envy. Since you and I, yes, you and I, can be of a like service to Him still. For so close are the bonds between Him and His people, that to help them is to help Him, He says. If carrying ourselves gallantly we encourage a weaker soul to rally, if trusting God when things are difficult for us we shame some other out of peevishness towards Him, if acting generously and unselfishly in the little nothings that make up our days we cheer some fellow man or woman to hold on, He counts it in His marvellous condescension as a personal favour done to Him Himself, and accepts it gratefully from our soiled hands and blundering hearts. We can help Jesus Christ.

While in Luke also it is plain that the storm blew itself out, the darkness lifted, and the day closed in an evening still and calm and golden. 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Here am I; do with Me what Thou wilt: My life I hand to Thee, for it is Thine, a weapon shaped and ready for Thy use as Thou mayest choose here and hereafter. Out of the blackness burns so glorious a star. And on the Cross itself it is we come upon the most amazing instance even in our Saviour's life of that courageous childlikeness of spirit which He taught and lived, of that audacious intrepidity of soul that had passed through the worst and still believed undauntedly. So meaningless is it to chatter of Christ's loss of faith.

And perhaps none of us can gain something approaching faith to be called faith by any easier way than by treading at least a little of that same hard road Christ had to travel. 'Those,' says Canon Raven, 'who learn by sympathy and mental effort can win their way to a faith as confident as a child's, and far more secure, a faith that has faced the facts, and shared

the pains, and wrung from life the mystery of its laughter and its tears. But the right to hold it must be paid for at its full price, and that price is, I suspect, a Cross.'

A. J. Gossip.

Christ Misunderstood

Mark xv. 35.—'Behold, he calleth Elias.'

This is the closing scene in the earthly life of Jesus. He has been betrayed, He has been scourged and crucified, and in a little while the sorrow will be over. It is then that in His unutterable agony He cries, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani'; and some of them that stood by when they heard it said, 'Behold, he calleth Elias.' They misinterpreted that last drear cry. They thought He was speaking to Elias and not to God. So at the very end, and on the cross itself, Jesus was misunderstood.

¶ 'In His work for man,' says Rothe, 'it is the constant fate of God to be misunderstood.'

The very fact that Christ so often was misunderstood throughout His earthly life is a tribute to His greatness. There is a very real sense in which we are all of us misapprehended. Even the shallowest heart is far too deep ever to utter itself aright to any man. Yet in large measure we understand each other when we are moving on the same lines and levels; it is when a man is transcendently original that he is certain to be misunderstood. Men did not misinterpret John the Baptist; they recognized him as a prophet and they honoured him. And we feel that Jesus must be greater than John when the whole nation misunderstood Him so.

If Christ was misunderstood it was not from any subtlety of character. If He was supremely great He was also supremely simple—His life is transparent as the finest glass. It is hard to say how high the mountain is when the mists hang round it and it is wrapped in cloud; and there are men like that—men who never reveal themselves; and such men are certain to be misinterpreted. If we have not the courage to be clear, straight men, we must not wonder if we are misjudged. It is part of the penalty which every hypocrite pays that he is involved in perpetual misunderstandings. But Christ? He was sincerity incarnate! filled with one passion and pressing for one goal. There was never such a simplicity on earth as that of the character of Jesus; yet for all that there never was a character which was so hopelessly misunderstood.

1. In the first place, men misunderstood His motives. Think, for example, of His healing miracles—'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub,' they said. There was no gainsaying that the devils were routed, and that the sick were healed, and that the dead were raised. It was all part and parcel of Christ's gracious ministry. It was the Kingdom of God coming with power among them. *That* was the motive of it—let God's Kingdom come. *That* was the meaning of it—let sin be overthrown. And 'he casteth out devils by Beelzebub,' they said. Or think of His eating with publicans and sinners. We know the motive of that condescension. It was love—it was love unutterable for mankind—that shattered the barriers and made Christ a brother. But 'he is a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber,' they said. 'He feels at home with sinners, and so he eats with them.'

If we are truly in earnest about the Kingdom, and striving to live along the lines of Jesus, our motives also may be misconstrued. There is not a deed we do but men may question it, and if there be two possible motives for it, we may be certain that the world will choose the worse. It is that knowledge which keeps a Christian steadfast through the world's censure and the world's applause. In the light of Christ he has learned that his motives may be misunderstood. And so he takes the world's judgment very lightly, lifts his brow heavenward, goes forward to his duty, and leaves his final judgment to his God.

¶ In his preface to the popular edition of Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, Mr C. F. G. Masterman shows how nobly the great Victorian statesman risked misunderstanding and even political ruin in the fulfilment of his youthful vow to seek and to save the victims of 'the great sin of great cities.'

'He would persuade these unfortunates, whom the "unco guid" would not allow their skirts to touch, to come home to Mrs Gladstone's house, where they would receive food and shelter and self-respect from him and her. He never denounced them. He always replied with amazing courtesy to any woman who spoke to him in the street. . . .

'He never demanded penance, penitence, or

the working out of past sins in future misery, as is the custom in many penitentiary homes. He had no use for penitentiary or prison. His whole concern in each case was not with the past but with the future. . . . He would send these forlorn creatures to health resorts, paying for the whole obligation, and contriving, in conjunction with his wife, to procure them places of honest livelihood.'

'There was no worldly wisdom in it, we all know,' was the comment of Morley, *the agnostic*. 'But then, what are people Christians for?'

2. Again, men misunderstood the mystical and poetic speech of Jesus. They took Him very prosaically and literally when He only meant to suggest as music does, and so time and again they misconstrued Him. Take, for example, one of His early words, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.' And as He spoke, no doubt, He would wave His hand toward His own body. *That* was the Temple, the home of the living God, a thousand times greater than these mighty stones; but they were literalists—the Temple? there it was—and not one Jew in all the circle caught the rich suggestion of the Lord. So, too, in the sad sweet story of the home at Bethany we recall how Jesus said to His disciples, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.' They all loved Jesus—that little band of followers—and love gives a man eyes to understand. Yet they answered at once, 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well,' and Jesus, with a touch of pity at their dullness, had to tell them plainly that Lazarus was dead. They had not grasped the sweet suggestion of the word.

Jesus is still misunderstood in this way. There are men who love Him as the disciples did, and who are striving to serve Him in a life of duty, but they have taken the music of His speech, that was meant to suggest and to lead into the infinite, and they have built their arguments upon the letter of it, forgetting that it is the spirit that giveth life.

¶ This story is told of the composer, Grieg. He had taken one of Ibsen's poems and set it to music, and he invited Ibsen to come and hear it. Grieg sat down before the piano and played. At the conclusion of the rendering Ibsen got up and walked over to the piano, and took Grieg by the hand and said just one word: 'Understood!'[1]

[1] H. S. Coffin.

3. The world also misunderstood His silence. Think, for example, of the trial before Herod. Christ had been sent by Pilate to Herod, and Herod when he saw Him was exceeding glad. He plied his prisoner with ceaseless questions, and he hoped to have seen some miracle at last. But Christ would do no miracle, and would answer nothing. And if ever the silence of Jesus was misunderstood, it was that day by Herod. He took it as a confession of His impotence that He was speechless. The dignity of it, and all the royalty of it, was lost on Herod.

Is not Christ's silence still misunderstood? There is nothing harder for many a mind to grapple with than the apparent silence of our ascended Lord. It is not what God does, it is what He fails to do; it is not what Christ says, it is what He fails to say, that puzzles and perplexes many an earnest soul. Has He no word of answer when we cry to Him? Does He not hear the moaning of the world? Why are the heavens of brass, when such things happen? Until we are tempted to say, He does not know, or does not care; and all the time, like Herod, we have misunderstood the silence of the King. True, that silence is inscrutable and mysterious and dark. But we must not misinterpret it; we must suspend our judgment till the glory. And *then* it will so shine with meaning, and will be so bright with patience and with love, that at last we shall begin to understand the mysterious silence of our Lord.

Love understands the mystery, whereof
We can but spell a surface history:
Love knows, remembers: let us trust in Love:
Love understands the mystery.

4. Let us turn back to the text again. 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,' and when they heard it they said He called *Elias*. Can we not see the reason why they misunderstood Him? They had only caught a fragment of His speech. They had only heard a syllable or two. Had they caught the whole of it—let the whole sentence sink into their hearts—they would have known that He was calling upon God.

There never was a time when Christ was more misunderstood than now, for the very reason that we find at Calvary. There was never a time when fragments of the gospel were proclaimed with such assurance as the whole round truth. One man will take the Sermon on the Mount,

and neglecting everything else say, This is Christianity. Another can think of nothing but the sacrifice : the whole of the gospel is in that for him. They are like the men who heard ' Eloi, Eloi,' and said at once, ' He is calling for Elias.' It is wonderful what a single word—what a mere fragment—will do for any soul. A few stray syllables, like a strand of rope, may save a sinner and bring him to the shore. But for the Christian that is not enough. He must study and strive to have a full rich gospel. To take a part and think it is the whole is the sure way of misunderstanding Christ.

Knowledge and Access

Mark xv. 38.—' And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.'

The rending of the veil of the Temple, which means the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, is reported by all three Synoptists. The fact in itself is of trifling interest, but they saw in it a symbol or parable of what had been brought about by the death of Jesus of Nazareth upon the Cross. For it was *a letting in of light*; from that day onwards men have had to do with a God who makes no secret as to His purpose, and who actually wishes to be known. But it was also like *the opening of a door*, an invitation to all the world of men to come with boldness in their need.

1. In the Cross, if we read the symbol rightly, an end was made of secrecy as regards God. There is nothing in religion more ancient or primitive than the sense of terror in the presence of the unknown, which has embodied itself in the typical institutions of temple and priest. The very word ' temple ' seems to denote something cut off—an isolated bit of the earth's surface, where men, walking freely, come upon an obstacle, impalpable perhaps, but irremovable. The temple did not need to be a building. A mere line might be traced, but no unlicensed creature would dare to overstep it, and towards the shrine, the actual core and centre of the place, men could only stretch out weak hands. Something, they felt, is yonder, something infinitely strong and awful, but mystery hangs close about it. The other institution is the priest—the man who goes where we may not go, who looks on mysteries which we may not see, and who is thus the reminder that for us there is nothing in that quarter but at a distance and at second hand. In his presence we realize that we must take what we are told, for we cannot know for ourselves.

Nowhere was that suggestion of the secrecy and remoteness of God more elaborately expressed than in the Jewish Temple. It stood on its hilltop, with court within court. So far the Gentiles might come, and then—advancing by one stage—the Hebrew women, and nearer still, the men of unsullied Jewish birth. At each there was a barrier, and the penalty of passing it without a title was death. Then came the place of priestly ministry, the Holy Place, and finally the Most Holy, where only one man might penetrate, and he on only one day in the long year. And, parallel with that continuous narrowing of the circle of the privileged, there was a lowering of the lights, so that the nearer one approached the centre the fewer might come, and the less could be seen. The great altar stood in the broad light of day, but the Holy Place needed the seven-branched candlestick to light it, whilst the Mercy Seat lay in perpetual darkness, a darkness which was preserved with sedulous care. Such an arrangement was not without its teaching. It said aloud to men, In the midst of your world of actual, apprehensible engagements, here is one place where your eyes are of no help, where all the faculties which have served you break down ; and this is where God is, whom no man hath seen or can see. ' How dost Thou hide Thyself, O God, Thou only great, that dwellest in high places in silence ! ' cries Augustine. In many Christian Churches that is still the governing conception. The Roman Church, in particular, is built upon the inviolable mystery of God. How far away this is from the understanding which Mark had of the religion of Jesus. Why, he says, the veil was rent from top to bottom, and light came streaming in, and the heart of God was seen ! In the Gospels God is exhibited, not as in a shrine, but as coming out into the world, and commending His love to men ; and John is able to say of that revelation, ' We heard it, we saw it with our eyes and gazed upon it—yes, and our hands handled it.' Wherever God is there will, of necessity, be much that is beyond our apprehension, but there is no maintaining of a secret. There is absolute frankness, though it is about an immeasurable fact.

If the appropriate minister of the old order was the priest, the fit minister of the new is the preacher. The priest says, 'Here is a secret far too awful for you to make anything of it; stand at a distance whilst I transact the real business on your behalf.' The preacher says, 'To *you* is the word of salvation sent.' 'See,' he says, 'a man like yourselves, a carpenter bearing the marks of His trade, poor and tired and needy; when He speaks it is as for the common people, in words which are pictorial, simple, and winning.' And so little of the terror of the unknown appeared in Him that children gathered round, and the crowds pushed in about Him with their clamorous requests. But that, though much, is not the end of the revelation, for it was only when Jesus died that the veil was rent; that was the great disclosure of God's heart, and those who stop short of that will never know God rightly. That mystery of sacrifice is what crowns and completes our knowledge.

¶ Principal Shairp tells us his remembrance of a conversation he had with Thomas Erskine. 'He spoke of the awful silence of God, how it sometimes became oppressive, and the heart longed to hear in answer to its cry some audible voice. Then he quoted that word, "Be not silent to me, O Lord, lest if thou be silent to me I become like them that go down to the pit." Then he added, "But it has not always been silence to me. I have had one revelation. I felt the power of love; that God is love, that He loved me, that He had spoken to me"—and then, after a long pause—"that He had broken silence to me."' So in the Cross of Christ men feel that God has broken silence to them, the veil is rent from top to bottom and they find themselves looking up into the very face of God.

¶ Ruskin speaks somewhere of Wordsworth—'a measured mind and calm, innocent, unrepentant, helpful to sinless creatures and such of the flock as do not stray . . . but *incurious to see in His hands the print of the nails.*'

2. As there is the assurance of knowledge, so there is the guarantee of free access. That is a boon which all men when deeply moved have longed for. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!' I have such need of God. My weakness cries aloud for His omnipotence, my ignorance for His wisdom, my penury for His unmeasured fullness. I have such need, and I fain would come, but there is something in me which detains. There is in men an instinctive sense of the wrath of God, checking the impulse of approach; and often, as in a man paralysed, the heart goes out, but the limbs have no corresponding movement. That difficulty is figured in the veil—the tenuous, impalpable obstacle, which need not block the way of the feeblest, and yet the strongest are excluded. They need God, but, with all their wishing, they dare not come to God.

¶ A writer about China says this: 'The Christian declares, I am a sinner; the Buddhist points to his heart, saying, Here there is no peace; but both mean the same thing. Both are anxious to have this miserable consciousness removed, and they are willing to do or suffer anything if only they can attain to mental rest.'

It is clear that many of the devout in Israel, long before Christ's day, had felt the mockery of the system of sacrifice; for what did it attain? That on one day in the year, and to one man in Israel, the privilege of access was secured. All that prayer and cost and effort—that river of streaming blood—resulted in nothing more than this, that the door was not quite shut, that God was not utterly inaccessible. And over against that, which was the orthodox faith of Israel, is set this sudden and decisive declaration: the veil was rent from top to bottom, as if by God's own hand, for this work does not have its beginning from earth. By God's own intervention, what all the sacrifices intended, but could never secure, has been achieved, and now a way is open for all men and all days, and an end is made of exclusions, and for ever.

Since it is sin which holds men back, God has found a way of dealing with it, and at His own cost. On the Cross we see One taking on Himself sins which were not His, bearing their penalty, and as a High Priest confessing that that penalty was due. 'Who is he that condemneth,' is Paul's challenge, when 'it is Christ that died?' Who will bar the way, when it is God Himself who bids us come?

No more veil! God bids me enter
By the new and living way—
Not in trembling hope I venture,
Boldly I His call obey;
There, with Him, my God, I meet
God upon the mercy seat!

In the robe of spotless whiteness,
With the Blood of priceless worth.
He has gone into that brightness,
Christ rejected from the earth—
Christ accepted there on high,
And in Him do I draw nigh.[1]

No doubt the veil was somehow stitched together, for religious people are peculiarly slow to confess that they have been in error. In one shape after another men have renewed against themselves the old exclusion, for it is not ignorance only which keeps men back from God, it is reluctance; and to-day the same disaster is repeated. Men know that something great was done by Christ, and that a way of approach was opened, but they do not care to take it. If a man is burdened with his sin, he comes and receives from his Father the loving sentence of pardon; if he has found life ungentle, he comes to hear words of healing and compassion and fellowship. But what gift can even the love of Christ bring to the man who does not care? Perhaps hunger first and sorrow—perhaps, in His kindness, the coming of human love and responsibility for a home and children, anything that will set the heart He made crying after God. But whenever the heart awakens and a man says, 'I will arise and go to my father,' he finds the Father come half-way to meet him. For the witness of Jesus is that with God there is no exclusion or reserve, but a vehement desire to give Himself to the need of His children.[2]

Spake our Lord: 'If one draw near
Unto God—with praise and prayer—
Half a cubit, God will go
Twenty leagues to meet him so.'

He who walketh unto God,
God will run upon the road,
All the quicklier to forgive
One who learns at last to live.[3]

[1] *Hymns of Ter Steegen.*
[2] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 176.
[3] Sir Edwin Arnold.

The Centurion's Testimony

Mark xv. 39.—'And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.'

One man, and one man only, is wholly competent to tell us the story of the death of Jesus. That man is this Roman centurion. It was he who sent his band across the brook Kedron in the soft moonlight to arrest Jesus. It was he who guarded Him as He was led to the house of Caiaphas, and then marched Him as a dangerous rebel first to Pilate, then to Herod, and then back to Pilate again. He overheard the strange parleying between Jesus and Pilate; he superintended the scourging; he looked on when the soldiers mocked Him; and it was by his lips that the message of Pilate's wife reached the governor's ears. At his word of command the glittering spears began to move along the way to Calvary; he saw the nails driven in, and then he stood with watchful eye and open ear, in the strength of his Roman discipline, and marked how Jesus died.

1. Of this man we know nothing certainly until he stands in the light of the dying face of Jesus. That he was a soldier assures us of an ingrained habit of obedience, a perfect courage, an unflinching loyalty, and an honest and greatly simple heart. That he was a Roman soldier tells us that he belonged to the most dauntless army the world has known, whose deeds of valour went back through an almost unbroken record of success through seven centuries. And that he was a centurion tells us that he was a man in middle life, who had seen service, and had risen through merit to his high command. It may be safely said that among the centurions of the Roman army was to be found the very flower of honour and chivalry. The Roman Empire was already in decline; but, like every great organization, it had begun to die at the heart. And when the pestilence of moral corruption had infected the governors and counsellors of Rome, there were still to be found in its armies men of fearless truth, of fine courtesy, and of incorruptible purity. How the governors in the New Testament stand out in contrast to its centurions! All the four centurions are men of moral, even of spiritual, beauty. Of one of them the Jews

said, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue,' and Jesus said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' Of another, Cornelius, the record is that 'he was a just man, and one that feareth God.' The third was Julius, the centurion of Augustus' band, who 'courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty.' And the fourth was this centurion at the Cross, who, as the slow hours of the day passed away, watched Jesus die, and in the few and emphatic words of a soldier's lips, bore to Him his confident testimony.

2. Now the question this man enables us to answer is what a man of a good and honest heart, with only a Roman's education, and with pagan ideas, thought of Jesus when he saw Him die.

(1) His first witness to Jesus is, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man.' It was the innocence, the moral beauty, the unspotted righteousness of Jesus, which dawned upon him. He saw the crucifixion to be that horrible injustice, a judicial wrong. There the Roman in him spoke. Justice was the very breath of life to a Roman. In spite of the accusations, in spite of the derision, in spite of Pilate's judgment, in spite of the dead weight of native prejudice, the centurion saw with a flash of insight into the character of Jesus. This business of crucifixion was no new thing to him. He had seen the reckless criminal, the coarse murderer, the political assassin, hang on the cross. But here were such gentle words of blessing, such consideration, such absence of resentment, such heart-affecting prayers; here he saw a moral stainlessness that all the annals of history could not match; a deep conviction seized him, and he broke the stillness of that awful moment with his strong, soldier-like words: 'Certainly this was a righteous Man.'

(2) The centurion was arrested, not only by the character of Jesus, but by the manner of His dying. Jesus died as a hero dies. For, as two of the Evangelists report, the centurion cried: 'Truly this man was a Son of God.' His primary meaning is that Jesus was plainly no ordinary mortal, no such man as he was himself, cast in a merely earthly mould, but, like the heroes who had done the great deeds of Roman valour, of the lineage of the gods. Such heroism in dying out-distanced all he knew, and he knew well the meaning of heroism. But never had he seen a death like this in which—as life dripped slowly away, as taunts were cast at Him that would have made a soldier blaze with fury—a holy calm, a perfect self-mastery, a Divine majesty breathed forth prayer and benediction. It was a soldier spirit who had witnessed that 'Never man spake like this Man,' and this fellow-soldier testified, 'Never man died like this Man.'

But we may, in justice to this heroic and fearless man, find a deeper thought in the words than that Jesus was righteous in His life, and played the hero in His death. We dare not press his words so far as to say that when he called Jesus 'a Son of God,' he meant what such words would have implied on the lips of a disciple—certainly not in the speech of Peter or of John. But they do mean that this centurion felt himself to be in the presence of a great mystery, and realized that Jesus was kin with Divinity.

¶ Rousseau, comparing the death of Socrates with the death of Christ, reminds us how Socrates drank the hemlock surrounded by his disciples, listening to the most tender words, honoured by his friends; but Jesus dies, betrayed, surrounded by a mocking enemy, racked to death by the most horrible form of dying. Yet He dies blessing His foes, and Rousseau sums it up by saying, 'If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus lived and died like a God.'

3. This, then, is what the Roman centurion saw in Jesus as he watched Him die; and when we remember what he was in mind and training, we see that his confession was very great. It had the greatness of sincerity and of fearlessness. And yet, while we commend, we cannot but pity. His eyes were holden. He saw in Jesus only what he had eyes to see. No man can do more. And God, who does not gather where He has not strewn, accounted this man's dim, imperfect faith for righteousness, and looked down with a glad approval when he testified, not only to the moral greatness, but to the Divine mystery in Jesus. And yet all the saints and confessors since his day—from that dying thief who heard his honest, imperfect words, down to the last devout reader of the story—have looked on this centurion with a touch of pity. He spent a whole day with Jesus, he saw Him die, and yet he did not know Him to be the Lord. What hindered him from discerning the wonderful truths?

(1) The first defect in the centurion was his *want of the sense of sin.* We do not realize how entirely we owe the sense of sin which is, in lesser or in greater measure, so universal in Christendom, to the teaching, the example, and, above all, to the Cross of Christ. Wherever these lose their power the sense of sin becomes as dormant as a lost faculty.

¶ Lecky says, in one of the most eloquent passages in his *History of European Morals*, that 'while the Greek and Roman world was perplexed by the mystery of being, and shadowed by the suffering of life, and while it was moved by the examples of great heroism, there was no sense of sin possessing men's hearts. Remorse was an unknown passion. A penitent's shame was impossible. The burden of guilt did not rest on even a criminal's heart. Men looked on deeds of infamy, and were not shocked. The sin of the world and its moral corruption infected the air. Men were naked and not ashamed, not because they were innocent, but because no sense of guilt assailed them.'

(2) The second defect in the centurion was his *want of a true conception of God.* The god of whom he spoke was not the God and Father of Jesus Christ. His thoughts flashed back to some pagan deity who was fabled to dwell in a grotto, or was worshipped in some stately temple, or at best to one who was an unknown god, capricious in his will, dark in his purposes, and inscrutable in his dealing with men. Had he known that God 'who is a Spirit,' 'who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all,' he might have looked up, and, in a vision, seen the Son of the living God. Had he for one moment seen what the dying thief saw—the pity and the longing after men—he would have been transformed by the renewing of his mind, and he would have known his Redeemer.

(3) The third defect in this centurion was his *ignorance of a love which will die to redeem.* That God so loved men as to die for them was to his darkened mind utterly incredible. He could have understood one who, by wise word and patient deed, had nourished the aspirations and enlightened the minds of men. He could have understood one who died in a chivalrous struggle against wrong. He could have understood another Socrates drinking his cup of hemlock with a sober jest, treating death with unconcern. But a love of God for man so great that it would die to redeem such a coarsened criminal as that reviling thief, and was even then longing after that bewildered centurion, never dawned upon him.

4. There are men among us to-day, after all the centuries of the light and the teaching of Jesus and His Cross, who see no more in Him than was seen by this sincere and honest centurion. They are full of praise of the righteousness, the moral loveliness, the spiritual greatness of Jesus. Already every tongue is ready to confess Jesus as the supreme and only master of the moral life of man. As freely do all men acknowledge the heroism of His death. And all men feel that Jesus is not like other men. They confess the mystery of His being. The Divine, they say, was in Him, in a measure seen in no other man. 'Certainly this was a righteous Man,' 'Truly this was a Son of God,' are words that might have been coined to express their thoughts.

But these do not enter into the secret of Jesus. They never see 'the Lord.' What do they need to cleanse their eyes? They need exactly what this centurion needed. When a vivid consciousness of his sin seizes a man; when the voice of God, speaking within him, calls up a past for which he can never atone, and convinces him of an evil nature; when a haunting sense of a spiritual personal God, who does not only set his sin in the light of His countenance, but bears it as a burden on His heart, becomes his constant and inescapable experience; when he realizes that this God, who hates evil and cannot look upon it except with the anger and anguish of holiness, nevertheless loves him; when such a man looks at the Cross of Jesus, he sees more than a righteous man dying a heroic death, and manifesting Himself to be the Divinest of men. He sees 'Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' There is no other way—as centuries of experience prove beyond all question—of reaching faith in the eternal Son of God. One vivid sight of the print of the nails alone can evoke the rapturous and adoring confession, 'My Lord and my God.'

¶ This was the experience of Thomas Scott, the Socinian vicar. Coming out of a sick-room, where he had been smitten with deep conviction

of his sin, he looked anew at Him whose claims he had belittled, and saw Him as Redeemer and Lord. Every page of his rich and heavenly commentary, so justly dear to Christian men, is studded with the praise of Him who is Lord of all. This was the experience of Thomas Chalmers, rising from his sick-bed in which he had faced the menace of death, and looking back on his past ministry as a term of years worse than wasted, because he had not known and believed the love of God in Christ. He set himself with a penitent's zeal to change the religious thought of Scotland, and to lead multitudes to the Cross and to deeds of kindred sacrifice.[1]

Joseph of Arimathæa

Mark xv. 43.—'Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.'

1. THERE are two facts about Joseph of Arimathæa upon which the Evangelist lays emphasis. He was himself looking for the Kingdom of God; and he was a councillor of honourable estate; that is to say, he was a man of rank and standing in the councils of the nation. Now those two facts in themselves suffice to explain Joseph's spiritual history. The first explains how he came to be a disciple of Christ at all, and the second explains why it was that for a long time Joseph feared to declare himself, and was content to remain a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. Let us take the first fact to begin with.

(1) 'He also waited for the kingdom of God.' To wait for the Kingdom of God was to be one of that band of devout and prayerful men and women who were steeped in the spirit of the Old Testament, who had sure faith in the God of Israel, who waited for the hour to strike when the Messiah would come, and the will of God be done on earth as it was in heaven. It was that Kingdom which Simeon and Anna longed to see before death should seal their eyes; before whose narrow door Nicodemus stood and did not know it, or understand its call. That he 'waited' meant that in the heart of Joseph there was a noble discontent with the corruptions and miseries and bondages of the times, and an unquenchable longing for the reign of righteousness, peace, and joy. As he passed through the land and remembered the great days of old, his heart was pained within him. As he walked in the city and saw, as Jesus saw, iniquity infesting it, and the vultures of vengeance hovering over it, his mind was filled with brooding thoughts. And as he sat in the council and looked with his clear, honest eyes into the craft and chicanery of Caiaphas and his tools, hope almost died within him. What could such a man with his shadowed spirit do but join these who could only wait and long and pray for the Kingdom of God? Very naturally he became Jesus' disciple. The holiness of Jesus fascinated him. The compassion of Jesus for the people of Israel, 'as sheep without a shepherd,' caught both his imagination and his heart. The deeds of Jesus brought back the days that seemed for ever gone, when God's power was known in every valley and hill in the land.

(2) How was it, then, that Joseph is not mentioned in the list of Christ's disciples? How was it that the rulers in Jerusalem were obviously unaware that he had become a friend and disciple of Christ? The answer to these questions is to be found in the second fact about Joseph which the Evangelist emphasizes. He was a councillor, a man of rank and position, and, as Matthew adds, rich into the bargain. All this explains why, though Joseph was sure in his soul that Jesus was the Messiah, he was not to be found, openly at any rate, in the Lord's company.[1]

The cost of following Jesus, for Joseph, would have been much greater than it was for Andrew or Matthew or Nathanael. Like another rich young ruler, his wealth and his position held him back. And then he knew the relentless hate and remorseless persecution of the Sanhedrin. For the fishermen from the lake to follow Jesus roused no keen feeling. But for a ruler, a man conspicuous in the public eye, to believe on Him would have raised a storm of passion which would have swept him out of his place.

2. Now very plainly Jesus did more for Joseph of Arimathæa on the Cross, and by the Cross, than by all the words and deeds of His life. Let us think of the deep and enduring

[1] W. M. Clow.

[1] J. D. Jones, *St Mark*, 244.

spiritual changes which passed upon this disciple as he saw Jesus die.

(1) *The Perfecting of his Religious Character.*—The first and greatest work of the Cross of Christ upon the soul is to free it from the burden of guilt. All of us look up humbly at the Cross, sooner or later. We may begin our pilgrimage in many ways: one through love of holiness; another through loyalty to the word of Christ; another through adoration of His character. But, sooner or later, the burden of guilt is felt, and we humbly stand below the Cross to find the burden roll back into the open grave at its foot. And the Cross also reveals God, both in His holiness and in His love. Much as we realize God's holiness in His law, and God's love in His unfailing providence, they are both fully revealed only in the Cross of Christ. But the Cross does more than work out redemption and teach us God. It perfects, with the swift ease of unveiled grace, our religious character. This man knew and revered Jesus; he had been taken captive by the spell of His words, and had bowed down in spirit to Him, as the Leader of the souls of men. A faith, feeble and fearful, was hidden in his heart. But it was not until he stood below the Cross, until its grace and power and irresistible appeal fell upon him, that his faith broke its bonds, and he did his daring, his lovely, his costly deed, and went down to his house that night, attended by a company of angels, and hearing their songs in his heart.

(2) *Enlightenment as to the Use of his Wealth.*—Very evidently the chief talent God gave Joseph was his wealth, and all the power and influence which accrues to wealth. The ample means of Joseph might have given a kindly ministry to Jesus, when He was so homeless that, as He pathetically expressed it, He had 'not where to lay his head.' It might have secured an entrance for the word of Jesus among the highly-placed in Jerusalem. Joseph stood all the day idle in the market-place, and only at the eleventh hour, as he stood beside the Cross, and discerned the grace of Him who was rich, and for his sake became poor, did he see a service he could do for Jesus. Joseph of Arimathæa could not have been an apostle. Apostles are made only of more adventurous spirits. But his name might have been linked with that of Barnabas. He might have been a second Lazarus, and the story of the feast in Arimathæa might have been as moving as the holy idylls of Bethany. But now that he is enlightened by the Cross, he sees what he can do for Jesus. 'He laid him in his own new tomb.' And wheresoever in all the world this gospel shall be preached, there also this that this man hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of him.

The Bible does not condemn riches. It nowhere demands that every man shall denude himself of his possessions, although Jesus teaches that the giving up of all a man has may be, at times, not only a religious duty but a spiritual necessity. The Bible frankly realizes that wealth may be a symbol of splendid achievement. But the Bible from beginning to end is filled with warnings. The possession of riches is a constant peril to heart and life. The love of them is a blighting and searing passion, and the right use of them is one of the triumphs of life and one of the most enriching disciplines through which a man can pass. Wealth is held by Jesus to be a talent to be used—an opportunity to be taken advantage of. Joseph saw his opportunity. The poor could have carried Jesus to His burial and wept their tears of desolation over His grave. Only the rich could have saved the body of His holy sacrifice from the ignominy of the Potter's Field, and given Him a fitting tomb.

(3) *It Filled Him with Penitent Shame.*—The sight of the Cross perfected Joseph's religious character; it enlightened his mind in the use of his wealth. But it had a third effect, which was the root and cause of these two great changes—it filled him with a penitent shame. We can realize the remorse which was gnawing within him. Why had he held so long aloof from Jesus? Why had he shrunk from declaring himself? Why had he allowed three years of a ministry to be accomplished and yet never once boldly stood beside Jesus? How questions and regrets pursued him and vexed him. 'Sero Te amavi,' the words afterwards spoken by St Augustine, 'All too late have I loved Thee,' would doubtless express the inner sense that stirred his heart, as he strove by the fervour of present devotion to repair the tardy failures of the past.

'He went in boldly unto Pilate,' and with the hunger of a man eager to do a service for his Lord, and so atone for days of lost opportunity, he besought the body of Jesus. And then, in his own grave, prepared for his own costly burial,

with his own hands, unheeding all thought of defilement, he laid Jesus to His rest.

> He bears Him to his new-hewn tomb,
> Jesus, to whom he did not bow;
> He leaves Him in its sacred gloom,
> His Lord, his Saviour, now!

It is remarkable that the tenderest offices of devotion towards the dead body of the Christ should have fallen to the lot of one who had never made public claim to be a disciple. It is one of the deep mysteries of God's providence in relation to individual souls. And it is one of the consoling mercies of the Cross, and one of the mighty manifestations of Divine goodness made through it to all, that it draws to itself the hearts of them that were tempted to remain afar off, that it turns their weakness into strength, clothes them with a new spiritual manhood, and transforms them from passive or fitful sympathisers into open disciples and faithful servants of their crucified Lord.[1]

¶ St Augustine gives us an account of a secret disciple of his own time who came at length to realize the need of open confession. Said Victorinus, a famous teacher of Milan, who had read and studied the Bible, to Simplicianus, the father of St Ambrose, 'Understand I am already a Christian.' Said Simplicianus, 'I will believe it when I see you a member of the Church.' Then said Victorinus in banter, 'What! do walls make a Christian?' And over and over again the self-same conversation took place; for, says St Augustine, Victorinus feared to offend his friends. But there came a time when the burden grew too heavy. Dearer than any earthly friendship, higher than any earthly claim, were the friendship and the claim of Him who had said, 'He that is ashamed of Me, of him too will I be ashamed before My Father and the holy angels.' So he presented himself suddenly to Simplicianus, saying, 'Go we now to the church, I desire to be made a Christian.' And to the church they went, and the aged rhetorician took the place of the little child, and was instructed in the things of the Kingdom.[2]

[1] Edmund English, *Sermons and Homilies*, 151.
[2] W. A. Gray.

The Shadow of Death

Mark xv. 46.—'And he brought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.'
Mark xvi. 6.—'He is risen; he is not here.'

When we speak of the tragedy of Jesus Christ we are apt to think only of Gethsemane, the trial, and the Crucifixion, and to forget the descent from the Cross and the burial. But there is a meaning in the last scene of all which none of the others, perhaps, contain. Defeat, hopelessness, irrevocableness, the stillness of ultimate failure—these are written for the seeing eye in this verse, 'He . . . took him down . . . and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.' There is no hope there. It is the simple statement of the last, sad scene wherein love tries to reach beyond death, but cannot.

1. Consider what had happened. The previous night and day had been full of excitements and of heroism. Even the Crucifixion itself was marked by life and action. There were the mob, the soldiery, the taunts of one of the malefactors, the prayers of the other. Christ's friends, as they watched, were strung up to a violence of sorrow easier to bear than the heavy despair which was to succeed. Now and then they were spurred to some action to save Him. But even all that passed away. Slowly the crowd, terrified by the long darkness, crept back to Jerusalem. A soldier or two alone were left to guard. Apart from them the heath was deserted, but for the crosses and the dead.

Then, as the night fell, His friends returned. The scene has been presented by a mighty brush. In the picture John is there, and Peter and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene, as well as Joseph. And all their energy is gone. Their eyes are red with weeping. In that which they have to do, what balm is there for them? The greatness of the Saviour upon the Cross might have stayed their fears. If they did not understand what it meant for the world (and, indeed, how could they?), at least His faith and His surrender might have communicated some peace to them. But now it was night and there was no eye to see, no jeering crowd to string them up to restraint by opposition.

There was nothing to be done but to take the flesh that once they loved so well and wrap it in a linen cloth and lay it in the grave. Silence, inertness, the stillness of the body that once was Jesus, the sepulchre, the rolling of the stone, and then the heavy walk through the darkness back to Jerusalem—that was the end of the story of the Son of Man!

¶ In that beautiful imaginative work, *Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord*, the 'disciple' who stood by and heard the last cry from the Cross, says: 'Now, up to the very last I had not given up all hope that Jesus might yet come down from the Cross, showing forth some mighty work worthy of a Messiah; nor did I, indeed, know how much hope I had had till this moment wherein all hope perished. But now, when I turned myself to go away from the Cross and to leave Jesus for ever, all things seemed ended, and I felt as one alone in the world; yea I knew not whether there were a God, or whether I myself lived, or whether all life were not a dream.'[1]

Only a grave in a garden
  Is left to the mourners at last—
Only the tomb where he slumbers
  To tell of the days that are past—

Days that were bright in the dawning,
  And hopes that were wondrously fair;
Breathing of freedom and triumph
  To hearts that were burdened with care.

Crushed are the hopes that they cherished,
  And dark are the days that remain;
Never, it seems to the watchers,
  Their eyes shall behold him again![2]

2. And what do we think of it? There are many who do not believe in Christ's victory over death. They have weighty reasons of defence for their view, but they cannot get away from this—that, in that case, that is the end of Jesus of Nazareth. 'The common lot of man,' say they. Ah! scarcely. For the point of that still, drear end is that it is, on this showing, the end of the story of *Jesus of Nazareth*, their Teacher, their Inspirer, in Himself their Light! That such a One should be treated so surely adds keen greyness to the picture. For what is there in all that story that indicates that the Ruler of the Universe had the least care for Him? If in His dying there had been, to Him, any promise of the victory of His Spirit in the world, the pain of the ending might not have been so sharp. But, on the night before He died, He had been deserted by every one. Absolutely alone He stood, without an adherent, as the result of His three years' work. At the end He had a few round the Cross who cared; but they were weeping, broken by defeat. There was no glimmer of hope of His victory for any human eye to see. It is true that His Cross has conquered; and we may say that the Ruler of the Universe cares for the race, in that, through the sufferings of Jesus, He has brought such good gifts into the world. But what of Christ Himself, who was not even to have the joy of seeing the gladness that should come? Still further, His own death was so cruel a mockery of His own teaching. The manner of His death was a contemptuous repudiation of His own life attitude. Jesus the Gentle, the author of the Sermon on the Mount, gets the world's comment on His teaching and on Himself on Calvary. It was the comment of nails and wounding, sufferings and violence, and that not only for Himself, but also for the two that were with Him. These were the last gifts that the Ruler of the Universe permitted Him to receive.

Now, we know very well that Christ has risen in a new spirit, which is making itself more and more felt in the world. And we know, equally, that the pathos and the cruelty of the death contain no logical argument for His victory over death. But we can say that if that was the end of Jesus, we are living in a world to which His teachings, or many of them, are not applicable. Moreover, we are living in a world to which the teachings of some modern optimists are not applicable. Where is the evidence for Meredith's 'kindly mother Earth'? This is a world that has cruelty at the heart of it. It takes a Jesus and it permits Him to be jeered at and crucified. It mocks His dearest ideals when He dies, and sends stabbing grief into the hearts of the people that love Him, and then offers Him solely the consolation of forgetfulness and of sleep. If the one really good man the world has ever seen, if this God-sent deliverer and redeemer of human kind can be thus finished with, one must begin to wonder if the moral foundations of the world are sagging, if good-

[1] George Jackson.
[2] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*.

ness is worth while, and if God's providential government of the world is not a pure delusion. It certainly is a world-government which does not deserve the assent that Jesus taught us to have to it. 'Thy will be done'—so He taught us to pray. But what if it be *this* will, that Jesus should be treated so and never Himself win through to reign? All who love Him will rebel against God's will, if that be God's will.

¶ Dostoievsky, in his powerful romance, *The Idiot*, describes two Russians stopping before Holbein's picture of Jesus being lowered from the Cross, with mangled body, and traces of pain, wounds, and bruises on His limbs. 'I like looking at that picture,' says one. 'That picture!' exclaims his friend. 'That picture! Why, some people's faith is ruined by that picture!' He goes on to explain that it is a representation of death as a blind, implacable force, working its will on this grand, priceless Being, Himself worth more than all Nature and all the earth. Scepticism, he argues, is started by the sight of this huge monster having power to destroy the Christ.[1]

The fact is that the whole Christian faith is possible only if the Christian ending to the story be accepted with the rest. For unless the ending be there, the power behind the Universe is not our heavenly Father and was not Christ's Father. To conclude at the end of the fifteenth chapter of Mark would be unbearable. To do so would involve the rejection of Christ's life-view as a mistake. We must at least go on to the sixth verse of the next chapter. 'Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here.'

The Stone Rolled Away

Mark xvi. 3, 4.—'And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.'

As we look at these three women—Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome—whispering together in the still, cool dawn-light, facing in their thoughts a difficulty they would never have to face in their experience, we can see a picture and a parable of our own attitude towards life. We borrow pains from unknown morrows, we are filled with misgiving about things that have no existence outside our poor foolish hearts. What was the women's difficulty? What was the subject of that colloquy in the dawn? It was a stone, too heavy for their weak hands to move, which lay across the mouth of the garden-tomb. And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away. Their difficulty was not in their situation. It was in themselves. That is where all the real difficulties are. It did not arise out of the real facts of the case; it was fashioned out of their ungrounded fears.

1. When they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away. Unseen hands had done for them that which they could not have done for themselves. The empty sepulchre tells us that though life is a problem it is a solved problem. Part of that problem lies beyond the veil. 'Who shall roll us away the stone?' It is a grave-stone. Beneath it lies a loved friend. At least we speak of Him, even think of Him, as lying there. And on that stone is graven the story of our earthly sorrow in the language of our heavenly hope. But not seldom the story counts for everything and the language for very little to the dazed and trembling heart. Facing that stone we face the greatest problem of all. Here on the borderland of the unknown we taste the bitterness of sorrow and face the mystery of destiny; and here God means us to feel the whole triumph of faith. At the touch of the scarred hands the sepulchre was thrown open to the sunlight of that fair Sabbath morning. So do those same hands unseal the grave over which the human heart breaks, that they who have passed beyond our ken may enter into the sunshine of the eternal Sabbath—there to find a warmer hand-clasp and a tenderer love than ours in the green fields of heaven.

> When, with bowed head
> And silent-streaming tears,
> With mingled hopes and fears,
> To earth we yield our dead;
> The Saints, with clearer sight,
> Do cry in glad accord,—
> '*A soul released from prison*
> *Is risen, is risen,—*
> *Is risen to the glory of the Lord.*'[1]

Are we not sometimes like these three women in the shadows of the dawn mourning their

[1] James Moffatt.

[1] John Oxenham.

precious dead—their vanished Lord — when already He was passing, joyous and calm, in the sweet air of the garden, listening to the matin-song of the birds. We need the vision of the empty sepulchre. 'He is not here. He is risen. Behold the place where they laid him. He goeth before you.' As these things were said of One who 'tasted death for every man,' we may say them of our dead. The shadows in which we walk are the shadows of our own ignorance and unfaith. We turn our eyes away from the tomb because we cannot pierce the darkness; but it might be with us, even as it was with the women, that our eyes should be turned away because we could not bear the light.

2. But the problem of life lies this side the shadows also; and here, as yonder, Christ has solved it for us. The empty tomb proclaims Jesus the Lord of life—the Lord of this life. What does that stone stand for?

(1) Shall we say it stands for *sin*? That is the very kernel of life's difficulty; that is the one great barrier in the path of human progress. Or rather it was once. It is not now. The sin that keeps a man back is no longer in his path—a stony barrier; it is on his shoulders, a burden to which he clings, under which he labours. Many a man is saying to-day, 'Who shall roll away the stone?'—is talking of sin as an insuperable difficulty in front of him. But that is not a true picture of sin. If the coming of Jesus into this world meant anything at all, it meant that the path into the light was made clear for every man. The Risen Christ stands for the complete and final removal of every obstacle that lies in the Godward path of humanity. The sin that keeps a man back from God is a burden on his back, and not a barrier in his path. The real moral difficulty of life lies in our hearts. And, like the Magdalene and her companions, we are kept back and filled with tremors, and hesitations, and shrinkings, and pleas of weakness, when we need but the faith—call it moral courage if you like—to go forward by the path of free grace, by the miracle of mercy, into light and peace.

The Easter message to us is this: Take a step. Go as far as you can, and you will find you can go as far as you ought. Get beyond your timorous speculations. Go to your Saviour—it may be as the women went, with a sad heart and in great perplexity and uncertainty—go to Him if you can see nothing but difficulty; and you shall find what they found, a clear way and a message of peace.

> Touch the rock-door of my heart,
> Christ, dead for my sin!
> Say, 'Come—let us rise, and depart
> From the shadows within—
>
> 'Out where the light of the stars
> Shines clear overhead,
> Where the soul is free from its bars,
> And Sin lies dead.'
>
> And dead the old Shadow lies,
> That has chilled my breast;
> Say to the sleepers, 'Arise!'
> Lead them to rest!

(2) In a more general sense we can apply such counsel as this to *daily life and daily service.* The women had spices in their hands, appropriate for embalming a dead body, a last tribute of love; a mistaken offering, but serving none the less to stand as an illustration of the story that is so often told in life—the story of the full hand and the fearful heart. They paused in their tender ministry and their mission of love, not because they had nothing to offer, but because they were afraid they would not find a way to complete the offering.

'Who shall roll us away the stone?' What a story of unused power, of unoffered service, lurks behind that question! Our lives get hedged about with hesitancy and misapprehension. But the Christ who has made clear for us the path of personal righteousness has made equally clear for us the path of personal service. The only hindrance to our usefulness is that which is found in our own hearts. The only thing that nearly makes us ineffective and futile in the service of the brotherhood is our own unwillingness—for one reason or another—to seek to be of service.

The stone has been rolled away, and the Christ is in our midst waiting for our service; and inasmuch as we have done it unto one of the least of these His brethren we have done it unto Him. The life of faith in the Risen Saviour is a life of continuous discovery. Along the line of His living purpose for us there are solutions, and explanations, and opportunities.

And it stands true now, as it has ever stood, that the heart that has sought the Saviour at dawn or noon or eventide, with a gift to offer or a gift to ask, has always been found of Him.

The Young Man in the Sepulchre

Mark xvi. 5.—'And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.'

It was a wonderful sight that the women saw in the empty tomb of Jesus. The Lord was risen, but in the place where His body had lain in death there was a young man 'sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment.' Before they had recovered from their surprise and awe the angel spoke words of cheer to them. 'Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him!' St Matthew makes the words rather more emphatic: 'Fear not *ye*'; as if to say, There are those who might have cause for fear, like the guards, but you are His friends, and need fear no harm in seeking Him. We can well understand how such an assurance must have been needed. To find themselves in the tomb in which they had seen the Lord's body laid and not to see it there must have been an overwhelming shock to them, and they might well have feared that they were in the presence of some hostile power. That was the first thought of Mary Magdalene, as narrated afterwards. 'They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.' But the angel takes them, as it were, by the hand, and bids them come and see the place where the Lord lay, and hastens to explain, 'He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said.'[1]

It is a beautiful picture—this picture of St Mark's of the Annunciant of the Resurrection—and one on which the imagination loves to dwell. It teaches us certain truths about the gospel of the Resurrection which are fresh and comforting and inspiring.

1. *The Rejuvenating Power of the Christian Gospel.*—This first preacher of the Resurrection was young. Is there not something significant in that fact? When Christ came to our world He found it very old and weary. The best days of Israel and Greece and even of Rome seemed to many to have passed away. It was an age of sad disillusion to the patriotic Jew. The glorious times of David and Solomon, and even of Ezra and Nehemiah, seemed to have for ever passed away. The nation was held fast in the thraldom of Rome, and groaned under the cruelties of Idumean foreigners and the rapacities of Roman governors.

Greece, too, looked back on the glorious times of Salamis and Thermopylæ, on the splendid genius of the days of Sophocles and Euripides, of Socrates and Plato, and felt sadly that, for all the patronage of Roman governors, it was 'living Greece no more.' And even Rome itself, though she sat on the throne of universal power, groaned under the sinister sway of a Tiberius whose dark soul plotted death upon every free-born spirit, and looked back amidst the corruption of the times to the freedom and virtue of the Republic. And her best writers looked back regretfully to a golden age in the past, and forward with gloomy fears to a future in which all that was best in human life would perish in a cataclysm of blood and fire.

But with this death hour of history there came the message of a new resurrection from the dead past, which changed it all. 'Thou hast turned our sunsets into sunrises,' says Clement of Alexandria, speaking of the new hope which had visited all their hearts by the message 'He is risen.'

Now it is in testimony to this rejuvenating power in the Christian gospel that Mark paints the first preacher of the Resurrection as a young man. It is meant as a symbol and a prophecy of what the faith in the risen Christ was to accomplish in the hearts of all who accepted it. 'Even the youths,' it seems to say, 'shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.'

And is not that a message for every age? To-day there is a sense of disquietude in many prophecies about the future of our race. The problems which lie before the nations seem to many too great for mankind to solve. Questions of race and colour, problems of population, industrial difficulties, and, above all, a feeling in many quarters that the religious instinct is growing weaker in the older races—all contribute to a certain depression in the minds of those

[1] H. Wace, *The Story of the Resurrection*, 27.

who would try to read the 'signs of the times.' But, as Canon Liddon once said, 'History is our best cordial'; and if we have regard to what Christianity did for the world in the past, we shall see no reason to doubt its capacity to solve the problems of the future. The young man at the empty tomb is with us still. Only let us hold fast to the faith once delivered to the saints and we shall see the same rejuvenescence in the world which began nineteen hundred years ago, when, standing by an empty tomb, a man, with a heart eternally young, said to a terrified world, 'Be not afraid.'

2. *The Virility and Joy of the Christian Gospel.*—A young man is the type of strength and manliness, and when the first preacher of the Resurrection is depicted in such a form, it is surely meant to teach us that Christianity is a religion for the strong. In some quarters there is a tendency to make religion only a resource for the weak and the broken-hearted.

¶ I remember once, says Dr Mackintosh Mackay, at a Conference of ministers held in Glasgow to discuss the question of the preaching for the age, Dr Parker closed the Conference by saying in his own dramatic way, 'What is the preaching for the age? I reply, The preaching to broken hearts.'

We want a gospel for the whole-hearted and the strong and the happy, as well as a gospel for the sad and the heavy-laden. James Russell Lowell, singing of the religion of the future, says it will be more than

> an ambulance
> To fetch life's wounded and malingerers in,
> Scorned by the strong.

Bruce Barton, in a little book on Christ called *The Man Whom Nobody Knows*, complains that the Jesus he was introduced to in the Sabbath School was a weak, effeminate, sorrowful Being, to whom no boy could be attracted. It was only when he studied the Gospels for himself that he saw that this conception of Christ was all wrong. Christ was a strong, heroic, and joyous figure, the friend of publicans and sinners and the lover of little children. There is truth in this, though it is exaggerated by the author. As a matter of fact, there have been multitudes in every age who, like St Francis, have been 'merry men of the Lord,' and have found in Him no 'kill-joy' but One who has come to give them life and that more abundantly. Listen to His descriptions of Himself. He calls Himself a bridegroom: there is a fair enough symbol of joy! He says that He is the light of the world. He compares His teaching to new wine, ready to burst the old bottles. There is no other spirit that moved in such a constant glow and warmth. Souls that have been profound seem so universally to have been depressed. We read of Buddha: 'So now he was lost, utterly at sea on a night that seemed to hold no faintest gleam of light, no slightest promise of dawn.' We read no such thing of Christ. His biographers tell of how Confucius, that 'accomplished sage' of China, 'shrivelled into a dry yellow sack, and his courage withered and faded quite away.' And of Lao-Tsze, how 'he was old, and very tired, and very wise. The lust of conquest had seeped out of his brittle bones, and only the vanity of all life and striving filled his bleared little almond eyes.' And of Zoroaster, there in the wilderness, that a great gloom came over him. For seven years he remained morose and silent while he brooded over the impenetrable blackness which life had become for him. But of Jesus Christ, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.'

When you want to refresh and invigorate a man you have to bring him into touch with Jesus Christ. He is the only one who ever made it possible for life to fulfil its destiny and come into joy. Because He is the only one who has ever been the master and the re-maker of men.[1]

3. *The Need of Moral Purity as the Condition for Receiving the full Gladness of the Easter Message.*—This is another lesson emphasized by this young man at the empty tomb. For he is described as seated 'on the right side of the tomb and clothed in a long white garment.' White, because that is the emblem of purity. 'Purge me,' says the Psalmist, 'and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' So the investiture of the first herald of the Resurrection is one of snow-white purity, in order to teach the truth that, before we can enter into the message of the Resurrection gospel, we must be cleansed in heart and pure in thought.

[1] Paul Scherer, in *Record of Christian Work*, May 1929, p. 279.

There is nothing that destroys faith like an unclean life. It is only the pure in heart that can fully see God. If we are cherishing unclean thoughts in our secret soul, we can never get to the right side of the empty tomb. So long as we live a life of compromise we shall never see beyond the walls of our swine-trough. It is only when we come back from the far country that we can see the Father's face and hear the Father's voice, and enter into the joy of our Lord. If our faith in the Resurrection message is feeble, let us see that it is not due to this, that our eyes are dim because of the life we are living. Our difficulty may be intellectual but it is far more likely that we are not living the life of moral self-discipline that is necessary to the vision of the living Christ.

¶ To a man of Gairdner's rich, vivid life the intensest struggle of the early years was for a blazing purity. In his diary he wrote: '*Purity*: the occasional (thank God) stumble in thought must and should never occur. . . . For their sakes I sanctify myself, O Lord—for the sake of the men I am going to see; and women and girls and children; for their sakes make me reverent and pure and courteous and chivalrous and Christlike. Also make me able to speak with the severity of God upon it—the wound of a friend that is precious.'

If ever a prayer was fully answered, this one was. 'Gairdner was pure in heart,' says a friend, 'not by shutting his eyes, but by seeing in all beauty and in every variety of gift that which is Divine. He could look at an opera, a dancer, a statue, and for him the Divine imperishable beauty of them was separable from the elements of sin that to less pure eyes would tarnish the whole.' He was so occupied with the holiness of beauty that he seemed unconscious of what to some was a lurking temptation. Being pure in heart, he saw God. But such purity was not easily come by.[1]

Despondency and Retrieval

Mark xvi. 5, 6.—'And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here.'

In that singular book of the Bible called Ecclesiastes we find an expression of utter dissatisfaction with life, a sense of its uselessness and fruitlessness, a general contempt for all that it has to offer. The writer has tried all things in turn, and his conclusion is the despairing one, 'All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it.' To increase knowledge is to increase sorrow; laughter is mad and mirth is profitless; labour is striving after wind: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' This is the philosophy of disillusion, and it has always had its votaries.

There seem to come recurring waves of this spirit and temper. One such wave has passed over the civilized world in recent years. A reaction of fatigue and weariness and disbelief in life and its finer values and possibilities has infected the minds of men. Multitudes of people have felt it a vain belief that life, and effort for the good and the saving of it, are worth while. There are those who speak of the decay of idealism and point to its consequences in a lowered moral standard, a spirit of lawlessness, a distaste for work, the craze for amusement, the prevalence of crime and violence, and so on in a sombre indictment of our time.

Now, whenever and wherever such an estimate of, and outlook upon, life presents itself, it is not a thing to surrender to, but to stand up to. Especially is it for religious and Christian folk to resist. The appeal of Christ is to persuade us human beings, especially those of us who are liable to disabling moods which dispose us to cease protesting, adventuring and experimenting, that life is for this very thing, and that effort in it is worth while. Jesus Himself went on even when it meant death in the dark. He still thanked God for the great chance of doing something with His life, even if it was to give it away. It was His call to men and women that they should gird themselves and live in the spirit of a confident expectancy. On the road where men lie mauled by the twin robbers whose names are Disillusion and Despair, Christ travels, as did the Good Samaritan on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on that road He travels 'in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save.'

1. In the vivid and direct narrative of St Mark we are told that when the despairing friends of Jesus came to the sepulchre they found a young man in a white robe at the empty grave. This earliest Gospel does not say that it was an angel. It was a young man

[1] C. E. Padwick, *Temple Gairdner of Cairo*, 42.

they saw, and from his lips came the message, 'Be not affrighted,' and the great announcement 'He is risen.' That 'Be not afraid' comes with rightness and inevitability in view of the tremendous announcement 'He is risen.' The Resurrection was the vindication of Jesus, especially His vindication in His life-choice of God. He had staked everything upon what He knew to be true about God, and it carried Him through life and through death.

But it was the vindication of God also. It means that, in spite of all seeming and circumstance, the soul of the universe is just. This is a world in which one who had trusted absolutely in the goodness of God, and lived utterly for the love and service of His fellows, one, moreover, in whom hope for humanity burned like a fire, rose from the dead. It is a mighty thing genuinely to believe this. If we think out its implications it means that the world is made so that in the end of the day God will triumph, and the Kingdom of God come, and His will be done in earth as in heaven. A faith of this kind is vital for the future of mankind. It is so easy to cease believing that the final victory of good is assured. From the peril and disaster of this failure of confidence the Easter message summons men to look up to Almighty God. He made the world. He keeps it in being. He redeemed it, and He will not allow His work to come to confusion. The message that Christ is risen rings down the ages its challenge of faith in the victory of good over evil. It confronts all the pessimisms of life which want us to believe that evil has the last word and the strongest hold. Compared with these dark creeds Christianity seems to have something of the reckless extravagance of youth in affirming that the good rises again after every apparent defeat.

So through the clouds of Calvary there shines
His face, and I believe that evil dies,
And good lives on, loves on, and conquers all.
  Such is my faith. I have
My reasons for it, and I find them strong
Enough. And wherefore should you argue? Well,
I can't. It is a choice. I choose the Christ!

2. There is a superficial optimism with which Christianity can have nothing to do. There are versions of religion which declare that pain and evil have no real existence, and have only to be thrown away in order to disappear into thin air. The stark realism of the Cross confronts all such make-believes. The story of the Crucifixion is a sufficient corrective of amiable theories about the inherent goodness of human nature. If we want realism Good Friday supplies it when it tells us how men took the Lord of Glory and crucified Him at the Place of the Skull. The world took the loveliest life ever lived and broke it. 'The Cross,' says a modern writer, 'is the collective sin of the world made visible.'

But when Christianity has brought us to the Cross and all that it symbolizes it does not leave us there. The conclusive hour was not at Calvary. There is a third day. Nor is the Resurrection a matter which depends upon old documents. It is woven into the whole texture of history. History tells us with no uncertain voice that there was a resurrection, and that the Cross, whose one purpose was to close the work of Jesus, gave it a new impetus and appeal. Hold what theory we will of the mode and manner of the Resurrection, Christianity did go on, after seeming complete and final defeat, to new and mighty victories. There is enough in that bare fact to stiffen the fibre of all despondent idealisms. The youth of the race need not faint. It may rather put on its garments of hope and say, 'Be not afraid.' That hope is well founded. Easter witnesses to it—the day which turned disciples who had fainted and utterly failed into apostles of a conquering faith. These are the implications of the Resurrection for the individual and for the human order.

¶ Early in 1918 the British Ambassador in Washington, Cecil Spring Rice, was about to leave that city, superseded. He was a sick man and, as it happened, he was to die within five weeks. He wrote thus:

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things
  above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my
  love
The love that asks no questions, the love that
  stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the
  best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays
  the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final
  sacrifice.

And there's another country I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know.
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul, and silently, her shining bounds increase;
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

'We may not see her King.' The Apostles believed that once, and once for all, that King had been seen upon this earth, and that their own 'hands had handled' Him. For myself, I believe with all my heart that they were right. Many men, much wiser than I, can only wonder about it, as well they may. But for him who wonders and for him who believes the same thing is primarily needful—that his own steps be guided within those shining bounds.[1]

Looking out upon such a world as this is, the message of Easter to us is that there is a Power of infinite love and grace able to renew and re-create the world. 'By man came death. By man shall come also the resurrection from the dead.' Christ is the measure of that man by whom shall come this resurrection, and He is the measure of the world's destiny. Let us give ourselves, mind, heart, and will, to the Will and Power which raised Christ from the dead, and we shall both see and work out His salvation.

The Meaning of the Resurrection

Mark xvi. 6.—'Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.'

What a sunrise this was after these dark days of disaster and hopeless defeat! The great Master had seemed to be the very fountain of life, with quickening vitality which nothing could destroy, and yet the fountain had been choked up in Gethsemane and Calvary! 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,' but hope withered in disillusionment, and the brutal majesty of material force held the entire field. And so all the disciples were in a mood of deepest and darkest depression. No one was anxiously watching on the third day, with eyes intently fixed upon a mysterious east. No; death reigned, and wickedness, and hopelessness, and no one was looking for the morning!

And then came the cry, 'He is risen!' 'The Lord is alive!' His tomb is empty! He has shaken off death and its cerements, and He has marched out of the grave! Think of that trumpet note pealing through the late night. Think of that great burning light streaming through the darkness, kindling life after life into blazing hope again—now the Magdalene, now Peter, now John, now the two journeying to Emmaus, now Thomas, until the entire disciple band was a circle of light again. It was an almost unspeakable revolution.

What did the Resurrection mean to the Apostles?

1. It meant that Jesus of Nazareth had been clearly manifested to be the Son of God. Before this wonderful morning the disciples had been the victims of uncertainty, chilled by cloudy moods of doubt and fear. But with the Resurrection the uncertainty ends. It is not only that the immediate darkness passes, but the troublesome mists are lifted as well, and the Master emerges as the clearly-manifested Son of God. 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!'

It is with that trumpet note that St Paul begins his great letter to the Romans. On the very threshold of this mighty book it is the eternal Sonship of the Lord which is proclaimed, and this in association with the fact of His resurrection from the dead. Here is the big-lettered placard we meet as soon as we address ourselves to travel this fine and bracing mountain road: 'Jesus Christ . . . declared with power to be the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead.' Not, 'declared to be the Son of God with power'; the power belongs to the declaration, the proclamation, the trumpet.

2. In the power of the Resurrection the Apostles saw a vast reservoir of spiritual energy for the quickening and emancipation of the race. This was their reasoning and their faith, that the Lord who had emerged from the grave, and had thereby vanquished death, had the power to vanquish all death, whether it enthroned itself in body, mind, or soul. This was their faith, as

[1] Lord Charnwood, *A Personal Conviction*, 91.

this was their evangel, that in Christ we, too, can rise out of death into newness of life, that just as He walked out of that tomb we too can walk out of the grave of our own corrupt past, and in vigour and sweetness of being become alive unto God.

Surely we have a wonderful symbolism of all this in the mystic movements of the spring-time. If anyone would be besieged by suggestions of the Resurrection, let him look about in garden and in field, and he will see the quickening glory. 'Never do I,' says Dr Jowett, 'so intensely feel the pressure of the quickening Spirit as when I see the black hedgerows bursting with their flooding life into green and tender leaf. Never do I so realize the surging, encompassing energy of God's resurrecting Presence. I can pray with more intimate and eager communion when the dominion of winter is breaking, and the time of the singing of birds is come.'

The yearly miracle of spring,
Of budding tree and blooming flower,
Which Nature's feathered laureates sing
In my cold ear from hour to hour,

Spreads all its wonders round my feet;
And every wakeful sense is fed
On thoughts that o'er and o'er repeat,
'*The Resurrection of the Dead!*'

We would have the resurrection power flow into our dead affections, and make them bud in tender sympathies, and gentle courtesies, and all the exquisite graces of the heart of our Lord. And we would have the resurrection power pervade our dead conscience, and make it act with hallowed sensitiveness, with fine scrupulous feeling of the sacred and the profane. And we would have the resurrection power possess our mind, and make it fertile in noble ideals, in holy purpose, and in chivalrous resolution.

3. The Resurrection meant not only something for the present, but something for the future. Christ brought not only life but immortality to light.

'Truly there is nothing any one can do in the face of death,' are the words on a second-century papyrus. A certain Taonnophris[1] and her husband Philo have apparently lost a son, and a friend, Irene, who had herself suffered bereavement, writes to condole with them in the following terms:

Irene to Taonnophris and Philo, good cheer! I was as much grieved and wept over the blessed one, as I wept for Didymas, and everything that was fitting I did, and all who were with me. Epaphroditus and Thermouthion and Philion and Apollonius and Plantas. But truly there is nothing any one can do in the face of such things. Do you therefore comfort one another. Farewell!

Very touching, is it not? The desire to mourn with those who mourn, and yet the feeling of utter helplessness in the presence of what death brings—'Truly there is nothing any one can do in the face of such things.' How unlike the calm tone of assurance with which St Paul comforts the Thessalonian mourners in like circumstances: 'We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest'—Irene, Taonnophris, Philo, and all similarly situated—'which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.'

We cannot exaggerate the importance of the Christian doctrine of immortality. It transforms our whole outlook on life—the present equally with the future. It enables us to see the reason of the struggle between good and evil in which we are forced to take part. Our spiritual conflicts are Divinely ordained that we may win a communion with God which shall outlast death. We are not earth-bound creatures, mere products of time whom time will destroy. In putting on Christ, we put on immortality.

¶ 'The more I ponder upon the mystery of human existence,' says Bishop Barnes, 'the stronger becomes my faith in the Christian doctrine of immortality. I spend much time in meditating upon the scheme of the universe which modern science puts before us. And sometimes the thought comes: We know so much and yet so little. Is it possible that in a few years I shall die and never know what lies at the back of it all? And then the utter absurdity of such an ending rises before me. No. God will not stultify His action. Surely a time will come when, in St Paul's words, "I shall know even as now I am known by God."'

[1] George Milligan, *Here and There among the Papyri*, 106.

Our Lord's resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of all that shares His nature. If we cannot permanently bury the Christ, we cannot permanently bury the Christ-like; if One emerged from His temporary grave, so assuredly will the other. It may seem at times as though truth is a frail and fragile creature, and men may take her, and scourge her, and crucify her, and bury her in a sealed and guarded grave; but, as surely as right is right, and God is God, that buried frailty shall reappear in invincible majesty, and shall incontestably dominate and command the affairs of men. That is apostolic teaching. 'Wherefore,' says St Paul, when he has just taunted the beaten forces of death and the grave, and sung anew the praises of the Lord, 'wherefore be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' The truth shall not go under in endless defeat. Every bit of truth shall live, every bit of chivalrous service shall abide for ever.[1]

¶ 'Truth,' says Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'gets well if she is run over by a locomotive, while error dies if she scratches her finger.'

Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers,
But error wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies amid her worshippers.

Mary Magdalene

Mark xvi. 9.—'Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.'

We are all familiar with St Paul's matchless hymn on love in First Corinthians. We know well the theory of Christian love, but nowhere can we see it in practice better than in those devoted women who ministered to Christ of their substance. So it was that Christ and His disciples were supported after their ordinary work was laid aside. Each of these women felt they owed an infinite debt to the Great Teacher and Healer, and how to repay it? They ministered to Him in Galilee; they travelled up to Jerusalem on the last dread journey; they watched Him die on the Cross; they followed to the tomb and beheld where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid Him; they returned with the spices to anoint His dead body. The synoptic Evangelists give us the names of some of these women. Luke tells us of 'Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Susanna, and many others.' But it is noticeable that in every list the name of Mary Magdalene comes first.

1. It may have been Mary's devotion that encouraged the others to be present at the Crucifixion. There is nothing to be done. But if their presence were perceived by the Sufferer it would afford that solace of sympathy for which His soul had more than once craved in vain. St John's account would lead us to infer that she alone was left at the Cross after Mary the mother of Jesus had been led away in the company of Salome and John himself. This was no place and no sight for any woman, but the fact that Mary Magdalene is here, and here by herself, is not only proof of her love, but is proof also of her strength of will and wonderful self-possession. She saw the place where the body of Jesus was laid and the precautions taken by His enemies: the stone placed against the mouth of the tomb, the Roman soldiers sent there to keep watch and thus to make assurance doubly sure. She noted all these things, for it was long after sunset before she left the neighbourhood of the garden, and several hours of the Jewish Sabbath had already passed. What a day that was! The one day in the history of Christianity that records a dead Christ! We know nothing of how the day was spent by the disciples; but characteristically the women found something to do. With Mary as leader, they bought and prepared the spices and the ointment to anoint the body of Jesus; and they were glad even to have this service of preparation while waiting through that long and dreadful Jewish Sabbath.[1]

At day dawn, on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala steals away to the garden. The early hour tells of her eagerness to resume her task of love as soon as possible after legal restrictions were removed. The Greeks did well to picture Love as a boy with wings. For that is the characteristic of love—it is swift and eager. There was still something she could do for Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus had embalmed the body. But it had been hastily done, for the Sabbath was at hand, and Mary was

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The School of Calvary*, 123.

[1] T. E. Miller, *Portraits of Women of the New Testament*, 145.

going to complete it. But who would help her to roll away the stone? That thought had been troubling her all the weary night. Her heart was full of it as she stepped out into the chill morning air. But as she entered the garden she saw at a glance that something strange had happened—the stone, that she had been vexing herself about all night, was gone! Now often, when one trouble is removed, there comes a greater trouble in its place. So Mary, instead of rejoicing at what she saw, was launched out upon a wider sea of agony. It flashed on her that under cover of night the body of her Lord had been taken away. She dropped the spices and ointments she was carrying, and leaving the other woman, she hurried back through the streets of the wakening city. Breathlessly she told Peter and John what she had seen. And then we read how Peter and John ran out, and how Peter impetuously pushed on into the tomb. And there were the grave-clothes lying on the stone slab; and on the stone pillow, raised a little above them, the napkin, still coiled in a circle as when it bound His head. The linen clothes, weighted with spices, had sunk flat; but the empty napkin kept the form of the Saviour's brow.

2. It was not to Peter, not even to John that Jesus first appeared. It was to Mary 'out of whom he had cast seven devils.' After discovering that the grave was empty, the disciples had gone away home again. But Mary could not tear herself away from the garden and the grave. So she stood in her sorrow beside the grave, thinking perhaps that Jesus was far away; and Jesus was never nearer to her than in that moment when she thought Him lost. She turned round; there was some one behind her. It was Jesus, but she thought it was the gardener. Some mysterious change had come on the Lord she loved, and it was dawn, and her eyes were dim with tears. 'Sir,' she said, 'if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I'—as if no thought of her woman's weakness could hinder the resolution—'will take him away.' It is not unnatural to suppose that at this point there was a pause. 'Mary,' says Dr Westcott, 'received no answer, and fell back to her former attitude of mourning. Simple human love had, as it seemed, done its uttermost and done its uttermost in vain.' But the moment of her greatest need was the moment also of her highest help. 'Jesus saith unto her, Mary.' It was but a single word, but it was enough. The personal address, the familiar tones, dispelled every doubt. And at once she turned and cried, 'Rabboni.'

At dawn she sought the Saviour slain,
To kiss the spot where He had lain
And weep warm tears, like spring-time rain;

When lo, there stood, unstained of death,
A man that spoke with low sweet breath;
And 'Master!' Mary answereth.

From out the far and fragrant years
How sweeter than the songs of seers
That tender offering of tears![1]

Mary on that Easter morning could not know all that God had in store nor how prophetic for humanity was the way that she trod. She came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which she had prepared. Those spices in her hands show what her outlook was, and how completely vanished her faith and hope. She had come not to greet a living Saviour but to embalm a dead one: she had come for the last act in a drama of love and sorrow, not to see the re-opening of a story that should never end. 'Blessed,' wrote St Peter, 'blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' That living hope derived its name and its quality from its contrast with the dead hopes which had gone before—how dead they were let the spices testify![2]

¶ Mr Chesterton says of Mary and her companions: 'In varying ways they realized the new wonder: but even they hardly realized that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation with a new heaven and a new earth.'

3. What may we learn from the story of Mary of Magdala?

(1) *Love is greater than faith.*—Christ had said, 'The Son of man must be crucified, and he shall rise again the third day'; said it many times. One would have thought His disciples could never have forgotten it, least of all when they saw it in part fulfilled. But they did forget

[1] Richard Burton. [2] J. M. E. Ross.

it—the women as well as the men. But their love outlived their faith. They had forgotten Christ's words. They had lost Him, and trust in Him as the Redeemer of Israel. Faith was dead, but not love. If He were no longer their Saviour, He was still their Friend—the best Man, the wisest Teacher, the kindest Friend they had ever known. They could not and would not forget that. If they must lose faith, and give up hope, they could not cease to love.

So love may live even when faith is dead. A true creed has its value. The faith which substantiates the articles of that creed, makes them true and makes them ours, is a very potent grace. But love is stronger and diviner still. It atones for innumerable errors. Faith is *of* God, but love *is* God. Faith is God's gift; but love is God's self and substance. 'He that abideth in love, abideth in God, and God in him.' Faith is of value to us, therefore, just in proportion as it helps us to love Him with all our heart. Let us hold fast by love, then, even though we should lose hope and faith. Let us hold fast by love; for so we shall recover both faith and hope.

There is a kind of love that faces facts, and it is a noble and courageous love. It opens its eyes wide to dark realities, and bowing the head it says, 'I must accept them.' But there is an agony of love that does not act so; it hopes against hope and beats against all evidence. It was a love like that which inspired Mary. No one will ever doubt John's love to Jesus. No one will ever doubt the love of Simon. But the fact remains that on that Easter morning Peter and John went to their homes again, and only a woman lingered by the grave.

'Love never faileth.' The mark of a real, vital, heart-felt love is this, *it holds on.* Through delay, difficulty, hardship, temptation, it holds on: through shame and insult and rejection, through the Cross and the grave it holds on. Our love is often sorely tried, does it hold on? For that is the mark of a genuine love—it never faileth, it hopeth, believeth, endureth all things.

More love, O Christ to Thee, more love to Thee,
This is the prayer I make on bended knee,
More love, O Christ, to Thee, more love to Thee.

(2) *To love is given the service of love.*—Mary had lost faith in Jesus, but He has not lost faith in her. 'Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my father and your father, and my God and your God.' What a glorious joy must have filled Mary's heart as she received this commission from her Lord. There was still work to do for Him. Hers was to be the great honour of first proclaiming the good news of His resurrection to others. Last at the Cross and first at the tomb, her constancy and devotion are now rewarded and she becomes the herald of the new dawn.

Magdalena, thou delightest
In the light that may not wane;
Resting where the beams are brightest,
Lo, thou fear'st not death nor pain;
Grief and woe henceforth are banished;
In the day the night has vanished;
Hallelujah! Christ is King.

In Another Form

Mark xvi. 12.—'After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.'

This is all that St Mark's Gospel has to tell us of our Lord's appearance on the Emmaus road. It is in the Gospel of St Luke that we have the exquisite story in detail. Luke tells us that when the Lord joined the wayfarers their eyes were holden and they did not know Him. Although when He spake to them their hearts began to burn, something interfered with recognition. And Mark tells us what that something was which kept them from recognizing Jesus—He appeared unto them 'in another form,' or, as it would be more correctly translated, 'in a different form.'

1. This little phrase calls attention to one characteristic of our Risen Lord. His Resurrection had made a difference in Him. He had a 'form' still, but it was not the 'form' to which the disciples had been accustomed. He had not altered at all in spirit and temper and disposition. His exaltation made no difference to His love. All this is quite obvious from what He said and did in the course of the great Forty Days. For instance, in the days of His flesh, He could not look upon the distress and sorrow of people without wishing to help them. He was the same after His Resurrection as before in that respect, for when He saw Mary sobbing her heart out

at the tomb He could not resist speeding to her comfort and help. He never could look even upon physical want in the days of His earthly ministry without wishing to minister to it. 'I have compassion on the multitude,' He said, 'because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat.' And in just the same way His heart was moved with sympathy for those men who had toiled all night and caught nothing, and who were drawing near to the shore disappointed and weary and hungry. And so, when they stepped out, they found a fire of coals burning, and fish laid thereon, and bread. He was specially pitiful during the days of His ministry to those who had sin on their soul. He was eager, above all things, to lift that heavy load of guilt, and so bring peace to the troubled conscience. And so exactly, after His Resurrection, He was quick and eager to bring peace to the soul of that disciple who had lived in an agony of remorse and shame ever since His denial in the judgment hall.

And not only was He the same in spirit and temper, but even in His little personal ways. Mary knew Him by His voice. There was no mistaking the tone of that 'Mary!' He was known by those two disciples in the 'breaking of bread.' He had a certain beautiful way of blessing the simplest food—'saying grace,' as we should put it. Habits are really the expression of character. The tone of the Lord's voice was the expression of the love of His heart. The 'breaking of bread' was the outward and visible sign of His close and holy fellowship with the Father. And character and personality abide. In these deep things, the things which matter, Christ was unchanged—the same Jesus!

And yet He was different! Not in essential things, but in outward guise. That is as unmistakably proved by the Resurrection stories as the fact that He was essentially the same. There is one striking and significant fact about the record of our Lord's resurrection appearances. Scarcely any of those to whom He revealed Himself recognized Him at the first. When He appeared to Mary, she did not recognize Him, but took Him to be the gardener. When He appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, they walked the whole distance to the village without even guessing who He was. When He showed Himself to the Eleven on the first Easter evening, not until He had shown them His hands and His side did they come to realize it was their beloved Lord. When He appeared to the five disciples fishing on the lake, they seem to have taken Him just for a passing traveller. It was only when their nets enclosed a great multitude of fishes that the truth flashed upon John's soul, and he said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' When He appeared to about five hundred brethren at once, on that familiar mountain in Galilee, the mount on which He had preached the great Sermon, He was so different that not all who saw Him believed that He was the Jesus of the seamless robe. Most of them fell down before Him in lowly and adoring worship, but some doubted.

But even after His Resurrection Christ was no disembodied spirit. He had a 'form,' though it was a 'form' of a different kind. It is indeed questionable whether a self, a personality, can exist without a 'body.' For the 'body' is simply the means of self-manifestation. Sir Oliver Lodge goes so far as to say that 'this dependence of the spiritual on a vehicle for manifestation is not likely to be a purely temporary condition; it is probably a sign or sample of something which has an eternal significance, a representation of some permanent truth.' That is to say, spirit, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, will always express itself in some sort of 'form.' While Jesus was a man amongst men He had a 'form' suitable to the conditions of time and space under which He lived. But when He passed into the spiritual world (as He did at His Resurrection) He had a 'form' of another kind, suited to the new conditions of the heavenly life.

Now does not all this throw some light upon the condition of the blessed dead? We have a pathetic yearning to know how it fares with those who have passed within the veil. Well, as we study what these records have to say about the Risen Christ, two or three things begin to shine bright and clear out of the darkness.

(1) We learn that there are some things which death cannot change and which it does not touch. It cannot touch personality; it cannot change character. We shall be essentially the same people on the other side of the grave as we are on this. And we shall retain into eternity, as Jesus did, the love and affection we cherished here on earth.

(2) In that eternal life we shall have a 'form.' We shall not be merged in one vast ocean of being, lost in the 'All.' We shall remain separate and distinct individuals. That is the great truth safeguarded by the New Testament doctrine of the 'resurrection of the body.' The New Testament does not teach that the material particles of this body shall rise again. The body that is, is not the body that shall be. But every soul has a body, a 'form.' Without some such instrument of expression and limitation, personality in any real sense ceases to exist.

Eternal form shall still divide
Eternal soul from all beside.

(3) While we shall have a 'form,' it will be a 'different form' from the one we now possess. We shall then possess a 'form' which shall be a fitting sheath for the soul, which shall be, so to speak, the visible expression of the soul, but which shall be recognizable as *our* body. What is the nature of the connection between that 'spiritual body' and our present material body it is impossible to tell. Whether it is that the soul has the power of creating its own body; whether, as a matter of fact, we are now, by the lives we live, creating these spiritual bodies which will show themselves when the present earthly body is cast aside, no one can say. All we know is that we shall have a 'different' body, a fit instrument for that heavenly life in which the limitations of time no longer obtain, a body that shall be like unto the body of His glory.

(4) The 'form,' though different, will be recognizable to those who love. The disciples, though they did not know Christ all at once, recognized, in spite of that altered form, their beloved Lord. And those who loved Him best were the quickest so to recognize Him. And it is a perfectly legitimate inference from this to assert that there will be recognition in the heavenly life.

Oh, but to find my Love again after the years are done,
And we both are safely dead and awake, with the new life stretching abroad,
For can She be She or can I be I, dear Lord, if we are not one?
Lest the sun grow dark, and there be no heaven, hold fast to thy laws, O God.

2. 'In another form.' Does not the phrase suggest that different people may get different views of Christ? There is no definite, stereotyped, unalterable conception of Christ. There are differences even in the New Testament pictures of Him. Peter's Christ and John's Christ and Paul's Christ—they are all at bottom the same Christ, the Christ who loved men's souls and died for their sins and rose again in triumph on the third day. But in each Apostolic picture there is a difference in the point of view. He appears to James perhaps mainly as the Lord of conduct, and to John as the Illumination of the soul, and to Paul as the Mighty Saviour from sin. Christ is so big that He is all these things. But each Apostle emphasized the aspect of Christ that specially appealed to him.

¶ St Augustine, saved from a life of sensuality and sin, emphasized Christ's redeeming love. Clement of Alexandria was a scholar nurtured in Greek philosophy and literature, and a certain innate purity of nature kept him unpolluted by the evils of his age. He was a restless, wide-ranging thinker who craved for some solution of the dark problems which haunt the intellect, and, like Browning, he found the solution in Christ. If for Augustine Jesus was the Saviour and Cleanser of the soul, for Clement He was the Light and Teacher of Truth.

To John Woolman, the Quaker, Jesus appeared as the infinite, ineffable Pity at the heart of this dark world, which alone is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life. Upon his tender heart the weary weight of the misery of the world lay like a mountain of lead. Without Christ he would have been crushed; with Him he was victor. For Phillips Brooks the life of Jesus was the sovereign beauty of the world. The spirit of His mind was the spirit of beauty; its depths were the depths of beauty.[1]

3. And is not this true of Christ in the different stages of life? He is the 'very same Jesus' to the end, yet different, in form, with every mile. *That* is where He is so like the Bible, for this is one of the wonders of the Bible. The Bible we cherish when we are growing old is identical with the Bible of our childhood: yet how different—how rich in new significance, how melodious with notes of heavenly music that we never had ears to hear when we were young.

[1] J. Fort Newton.

With every trial met and temptation mastered, the Bible appears in another form—with every illness, and every hour of heartbreak, and every cross that we are called to carry. And the wonder of the written word is just the wonder of the Word Incarnate: He is always appearing in another form. In ardent youth, the Lord of high endeavour; in the years of stress and strain, the Lord of Rest; in the evening when the first stars come out, the Way that leads us home.

4. As it has been with individuals, so has it been with the ages. Every age needs a new Christ and finds a new Christ. As the years pass, men grow in knowledge. And as they grow in knowledge, old intellectual statements become obsolete and impossible. And so we must expect views of Christ to alter. They have altered! But we need not fear that Christ is going to be superseded or discarded. There is such infinite fullness in Him that every age finds its satisfaction in Him. He appears to every new age as it is born 'in another form.'

And yet the same Jesus! Amid the almost infinite changes essentially the same. We probably should not speak of Him to-day exactly in the way Augustine or Luther or John Wesley spoke of Him. But, with all our altered interpretations, Jesus is the same to us as He was to them, the Revelation of God, the Redeemer from sin, and the Light of the world.

The Mission of the Gospel

Mark xvi. 15.—'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'

1. The two remarkable things about the gospel are that it is deep as life and wide as all the world. It is a message of redeeming power for the whole man; it is a message of redeeming power for every man. Here we have the world-wide message of the gospel, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'

These words were uttered by the Risen Lord when the agony of Calvary was over; it was when He was soon to leave His own that He commanded them to go into the world. It has been argued hence that this idea was only present with Jesus at the end. It was not part—if we may put it so—of the original programme of the Christ. But a little thought will show us that this conception of a world-wide mission was present to His mind from the first hour of His public ministry.

Think, for instance, of that mysterious hour when Christ was tempted in the wilderness. The last temptation was the sorest one—'Then the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and showeth to him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith to him, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me."' Now, how do our bitterest temptations reach us? They reach us along the line of our desires; they offer us immediately and in forbidden ways the things we covet and hunger for and crave for. And if in the desert the bitterest temptation was couched in dreams of universal empire, we may be sure that universal empire was the ruling passion in the Saviour's heart. It was not in the sovereignty that the temptation lay. It was in the way suggested to achieve the sovereignty. It was in the prompting to take the nearest road instead of the blood-stained path that led to Calvary. And the very fact that Christ was tempted so when He was fresh from His mother's home at Nazareth shows us that even then there burned within Him the hope and the vision of a world-wide Kingdom.

Or, again, take the Sermon on the Mount, which is the charter and the programme of His Kingdom. That it was spoken early in His ministry is not a matter open to dispute. Well, in the 37th Psalm we read that 'The meek shall inherit the land.' It is not so translated in our version, but that is the only meaning of the Hebrew. The Psalmist is thinking of the land of Palestine, and thinking of nothing but the land of Palestine, and he looks for a day when pride shall disappear, and every dweller in the land be lowly. And now comes Christ, and strikes out that word 'land,' and in its stead He places the word 'earth'—'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth'—the bounds of Palestine have been submerged. And then, as if to confirm that spacious thought, He says to those who follow Him, 'Ye are the salt of the earth: ye are the light of the world.' Clearly, then, at the outset of His ministry our Lord had His eyes fixed upon the world. The world-wide mission of His gospel message possessed His heart when first He opened His lips upon the hill, and it abode with Him

unaltered until the end, when He said, 'Go ye into all the world.'

If we would but reflect for a moment on the facts and on the circumstances that surround the facts, there is not one of us but would be amazed at the unparalleled boldness of our Lord's conception. We have read of an Alexander conquering the world and then weeping that there were not other worlds to conquer, but Alexander was born in king's estate, and had a mighty army to obey him. How different from this is Jesus Christ, who had not a single sword to back His claims, and who, in the quiet glory of His faith, believed in His world-wide empire from the first. Had He been born in Rome of Latin ancestry we might have better understood His outlook. For Rome was stretching her power into far distances, and widening the horizon of her children. But Jesus Christ was born after the flesh of the narrowest and most exclusive race that ever lived. Yet out of the heart of that most jealous heritage He looked with equal eyes upon the whole world. In every land His gospel would be preached; in every tongue His name would be proclaimed; the heavens and the earth might pass away, but His word would never pass away. Note, too, in what a natural way our Saviour talked about His world-wide mission. There was nothing like it in the Jewish creed; the Jewish religion was rigidly exclusive. But now there was to be neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, the Kingdom of Jewish aspiration had its centre in Jerusalem and its marching order was, 'Come ye and worship in the holy temple.' Christ Himself was the bond of unity in His Kingdom, and its marching orders were, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.' This familiar thought of a universal religion we owe to Him, and it is one of the most sublime ideas that has ever been granted to the human race.

2. The universal, timeless element in Christ's teaching constitutes for all who receive it an obligation to make it known. If only it could appeal to the West but were powerless to touch the East the case would be different; but since Christ's words have proved themselves 'the living contemporaries of every age,' every age has a right to them; because they are suited to all, they belong to all, and to withhold them from any is to withhold from them a part of their natural human birthright. Take Christ's teaching concerning the Divine Fatherhood. If that is true at all, it is universally true, and therefore it ought to be universally made known.

> I say to thee, do thou repeat
> To the first man thou mayest meet
> In lane, highway, or open street—
>
> That he and we and all men move
> Under a canopy of love,
> As broad as the blue sky above.[1]

Christ's teaching is identified with none of those things which in their very nature grow old and pass with the passing years. His precepts are not provincial edicts, but imperial laws meant to govern the whole world of moral agency. When will the Lord's Prayer be out of date? Different churches have their different forms of prayer, and once in a while they pass under the hand of the reviser. Even in the Psalter there are things that make us wince sometimes when we hear them in church. But no individual Church can claim the Lord's Prayer; it belongs to us all, and he would be a bold man indeed who should propose to lay revising hands on it. It is not simply that Christ was, as we say, 'in advance of His time'; many great teachers have been that, and yet, in the end, they have been left behind; rather it is that with Him the question of time hardly enters into the reckoning at all, and it is this quality of timelessness which, by detaching His teaching from any particular age, has made it the possession of all the ages, of all peoples.

¶ General Booth, it is said, in the earlier days of 'The Army' confessed that he was forced to make a choice; no man's arms are long enough, he said, to reach out to give a hand to the rich and to the people of the depths. Probably he was right, but Christ is confined to neither class nor time.

3. To-day we do not 'carry Christ' across the sea, knowing well that we cannot find any darkest spot on earth where He is not already. We have another view of non-Christian religions from that of our forefathers. The ground of

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 98.

appeal for us has therefore changed, but the burning desire to win all men for Christ is as insistent as ever. The Christian missionary goes 'not to destroy but to fulfil.' We are there to fulfil rather than to supplant the imperfect life of pagan lands, to show them by their very virtues and beauties the sad and tragic lack and failure that are theirs, and to supply that lack out of the fulness of Jesus Christ. The great business of the Christian missionary is to delocalize the gods of the heathen, and to reveal instead of them the one God over all, blessed for ever, revealed in Jesus Christ—in Jesus Christ, who is neither a child of the East nor the West, but is the Son of Man for ever.

¶ We hear men say that east and west shall never meet.

But Christ is Christ, and rest is rest,
And love true love must greet.
In East and West hearts crave for rest;
And so the twain *shall* meet,
—The East still East, the West still West—
At Love's nail-piercèd feet.

The Ascension

Mark xvi. 19—'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.'

1. When we think and speak about the things which are unseen and eternal, we can only use ideas and language which are borrowed from things seen and temporal. We speak about the Ascension of Christ, and we read in the gospel that 'he was taken up into heaven'—as though God and heaven were actually any more above us than beneath us or within us. We employ the images of time and space and carry them into that spiritual realm where they have no proper meaning. We confess that our Lord ascended into heaven—although He had heaven round about Him always. The Son of Man is in heaven, even while He is on earth. Heaven, then, cannot be another place, for no one can be in two places at once. What, then, is it? It is the environment in which eternal life is lived.

Christ brought heaven with Him into the midst of His disciples as often as He showed Himself alive to them after His Passion. Nevertheless, it was expedient for them that He should go away, that He might become no longer a local but a universal Presence. For the Ascension does not mean mere change of locality, but a passing to God. Christ Himself abides unchanged in personal character, since He has passed into the absolute and perfect order of being. He has carried our human nature with Him and now sits at the right hand of the Father—His work accomplished and His Kingdom won.

¶ The Greek words in Scripture translated *assumption* and *ascension* are suggestive. The former, *taken up*, implies more the power of God upon the perfected manhood of Christ; the other, *ascended*, carries with it the thought of co-operation—He carried with Him all that He had achieved in time of the wisdom of life.

2. One would have thought that an event like the Ascension would have had a large place assigned to it in the New Testament. It was so wonderful—so awe-inspiring—that we should have looked for fullest recognition. Yet as a matter of fact out of the four Evangelists *two* do not mention it, and in the literature of the earliest Church we hear but little of it. A man, however, may know a thing, and know it thoroughly, though he may not happen to mention it in speech—and so we believe it was with the Evangelists. For them the thrilling fact was resurrection. It was the Resurrection that had changed the world for them, and turned their weeping into joy. To them the Ascension was but the completion of the Resurrection. It was its necessary and inevitable consequence. They were so moved with the amazing fact that their Lord was risen from the dead, that all else was subordinate and secondary.

We are told the Ascension was close to Bethany. He led them out until they were over against Bethany. Mists of the night were lying upon the hillsides; then, under the stirring of the first tremulous breaths of the onward rush of day, rising, and slowly rolling in ghostly waves. Still He led them on and higher, along a way they had often trodden before, until the ridge was reached. On the brow of Olivet He turned and blessed them; and, as He turned, the clouds lifted from the hills, the mist which half-veiled the Lord's rising form is rent into

thin air, and He has passed. That there is majesty in this Ascension scene nobody will dispute. It is 'as the greatest only are' in its simplicity Divine. One moment the Lord was with them and praying for them; and the next He was not for God took Him. One feels that heaven is near, and God is present, and all eternity is stooping down. Yet it made little stir on earth and was only witnessed by a few of His followers.

¶ In a certain loved garden of the South of England I have often watched, at summer dusk, the opening of the bloom of the evening primrose, as the loosening furls of petal, by pressure from within and by an outward invitation of shadow and dew, shook themselves free into expanded loveliness—the work of a few moments alone, although prepared for by all the plant's anterior life. With as little theatricality was that moment reached when the full glory of the Son of Man, as type of all our race, wrought out the final separation from earthly conditions, and Manhood stood revealed as accomplished in the Divine.[1]

Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursèd tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
'I died, and live for evermore!'[2]

It was expedient that He should go away. Once the disciples were convinced that their Lord was alive His appearances came to an end. He ascended into heaven, not that He might be separated from them, but that He might come closer to them than ever before. In other words, the Ascension was necessary to the full communion of His disciples with Himself.

3. The Ascension teaches us, in the first place, the truth that the highest life, the life for which we crave, the life of God, must be sought by separation from the lower life of the senses. Life is not to be found at its highest within material things. It is not fully contained within this world. Though God in Christ is the life of the world, He has risen above and is independent of it. Christ, the very life of God, had to ascend. He could not be limited by, and enclosed in, this lower life of sense and outward things. To be accessible to all He must return to God. And His disciples, if they would find Him, must ascend too: 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.'

Disentanglement from the snares of the world, separation from the temptation of the senses, the necessity of seeking true life in the spiritual, and not in the material—all this was taught for ever when the Lord ascended into heaven. But this is not the whole truth of the Ascension. If it were Christianity would be a religion of asceticism, a teaching of withdrawal from the world in order to seek the spiritual life in meditation and prayer. The lesson of Ascension, that spiritual life is to be sought in and with God and not in the world, finds its true issue in another truth—that the life so found must be brought back into the world to claim it for God, and to redeem it. For when the soul that is seeking Christ ascends up above the purely material that it may find Him, and contemplate Him at the right hand of God, it learns a strange lesson. And it is this: that it cannot have communion with Christ in heaven unless it come back to earth again with Him, and live there. For that is what Christ Himself is ever doing. He ascended into heaven. Yes. And there He is with the Father. But also He has come down again in His Spirit into this world of ours, to bring men captive to Himself by filling them with His life. Instead of forsaking His work of redemption He is now going to carry it on far more effectively and gloriously than before.

And His disciples are to share in the work. We should have looked for a great sadness on that Ascension morning, but all their fears about the failure of the Messiah's Kingdom were gone, and they returned with gladness to Jerusalem. That hour of parting was an hour of exultancy and burning hope. It was big with promise for the world.

[1] A. D. Martin, *Aspects of the Way*, 144.
[2] Browning, *Christmas Eve*.

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